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THE

CALVINISTIC DOCTRINE

3530

OF

PREDESTINATION

EXAMINED AND REFUTED:

BEING THE SUBSTANCE OF

A SERIES OF DISCOURSES

Delivered in St. George's M. E. Church, Philadelphia,

BY

FRANCIS HODGSON, D.D.

PHILADELPHIA:
HIGGINS AND PERKINPINE.
No. 40 NORTH FOURTH STREET,
1855.

THE

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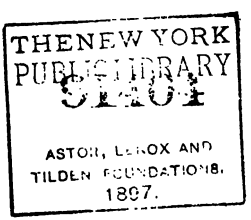

PHILADELPHIA:

T. K. AND P. G. COLLINS, PRINTERS.

PHILADELPHIA, July 13, 1854.

Rev. FRANCIS HODGSON, D.D.

DEAR SIR: We, whose names are hereunto annexed, having heard your recent series of discourses upon the "Divine Decrees," and believing that their publication at this time would be of great service to the cause of truth, earnestly desire that such measures may be taken as will secure their publication at an early period. We therefore respectfully solicit your concurrence, and that you would do whatever may be necessary on your part to further our object:—

JAMES B. LONGACRE,	P. D. MYERS,
GARRET VANZANT,	R. MCCAMBRIDGE,
JOHN J. HARE,	THOMAS W. PRICE,
DANIEL BREWSTER,	CHAS. MCNICHOL,
WM. G. ECKHARDT,	THOS. M. ADAMS,
CHAS. COYLE,	FRANCIS A. FARROW,
BENJAMIN HERITAGE,	THOS. HARE,
J. O. CAMPBELL,	SAMUEL HUDSON,
JAMES HARRIS,	JOSEPH THOMPSON,
WM. GOODHART,	DAVID DAILEY,
R. O. SIMONS,	JNO. R. MORRISON,
AMOS HORNING,	JAMES HUEY,
ENOS S. KERN,	JOHN FRY,
JNO. P. WALKER,	E. A. SMITH,
JOHN STREET,	JAMES D. SIMKINS,
J. W. BUTCHER,	S. W. STOCKTON,
JACOB HENDRICK,	FOSTER PRITCHETT.

DEAR BRETHREN:—

The motives which induced me to preach the discourses on the "Divine Decrees" are equally decisive in favor of their publication, as you propose. I have taken the liberty to rearrange some parts of them for the benefit of the reader.

Yours,

FRANCIS HODGSON.

To Brothers LONGACRE,
MYERS, and others.

PREDESTINATION.

DISCOURSE I.

"In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will."—EPH. i. 11.

IT would very naturally be expected of a preacher, selecting this passage as the foundation of his discourse, that he would have something to say upon the subject of predestination. It is my purpose to make this the theme of the occasion; and this purpose has governed me in the selection of the text. The subject is one of great practical importance. It relates to the Divine government—its leading principles and the great facts of its administration. Some suppose that the Methodists deny the doctrine of Divine predestination, that the word itself is an offence to them, and that they are greatly

perplexed and annoyed by those portions of Scripture by which the doctrine is proclaimed. This is a mistaken view. We have no objection to the word; we firmly believe the doctrine; and all the Scriptures, by which it is stated or implied, are very precious to us.

There is a certain theory of predestination, the Calvinistic theory, which we consider unscriptural and dangerous. There is another, the Arminian theory, which we deem Scriptural and of very salutary influence. My plan is, *first*, to refute the false theory; and, *secondly*, to present the true one, and give it its proper application.

My discourse or discourses upon this subject may be more or less unacceptable to some on account of their controversial aspect. This disadvantage cannot always be avoided. Controversy is not always agreeable, yet it is often necessary. Error must be opposed, and truth defended. What I have to say, is designed chiefly for the benefit of the younger portion of the congregation. I feel that there devolves upon me not a little responsibility in reference to this class of my hearers. Many of them, I am happy to learn, are eagerly searching for

truth, and they have a right to expect that the pulpit will aid their inquiries, and throw light upon their path.

The theory of predestination to which we object affirms that God has purposed, decreed, predetermined, foreordained, predestinated, whatsoever comes to pass, and that, in some way or other, he, by his providence, brings to pass whatever occurs.

The advocates of this doctrine complain loudly that they are misunderstood and misrepresented. The Rev. Samuel Miller, D. D., late of Princeton College, N. J., in a tract on *Presbyterian Doctrine*, published by the Presbyterian Board of Publication, complains thus: "It may be safely said that no theological system was ever more *grossly misrepresented*, or more *foully* and *unjustly vilified* than this." "The gross misrepresentations with which it has been assailed, the *disingenuous* attempts to fasten upon it consequences which its advocates disavow and abhor; and the *unsparing calumny* which is continually heaped upon it and its friends, have *scarcely been equalled* in any other case in the entire annals of theological controversy." "The opponents of this system are wont to give the

most *shocking* and *unjust* pictures of it. Whether this is done from *ignorance* or *dishonesty* it would be painful, as well as vain, at present, to inquire." "The truth is, it would be difficult to find a writer or speaker, who has distinguished himself by opposing Calvinism, who has fairly represented the system, or who really appeared to understand it. They are forever fighting against a *caricature.* Some of the most grave and venerable writers in our country, who have appeared in the Arminian ranks, are undoubtedly in this predicament: whether this has arisen from the want of knowledge or the want of candor, the effect is the same, and the conduct is worthy of severe censure." "Let any one carefully and dispassionately read over the *Confession of Faith* of the Presbyterian Church, and he will soon perceive that the professed representations of it, which are *daily* proclaimed from the *pulpit* and the *press*, are *wretched slanders*, for which no apology can be found but in the ignorance of their authors."

He places himself in very honorable contrast with those whom he thus severely condemns: "The writer of these pages," says he, "is fully persuaded that Arminian principles, when traced

out to their natural and unavoidable consequences, lead to an invasion of the essential attributes of God, and, of course, to blank and cheerless atheism. Yet, in making a statement of the Arminian system, as actually held by its advocates, he should consider himself inexcusable if he departed a hair's-breadth from the delineation made by its friends." (pp. 26, 27, 28.)

This writer reiterates these charges, with interesting variations, in his introduction to a book on the Synod of Dort, published by the same establishment. "They," says he, "are ever fighting against an imaginary monster of their own creation. They picture to themselves the consequences which they suppose unavoidably flow from the real principles of Calvinists, and then, most unjustly, represent these consequences as a part of the system itself, as held by its advocates." Again: "How many an eloquent page of anti-Calvinistic declamation would be instantly seen by every reader to be either calumny or nonsense, if it had been preceded by an honest statement of what the system, as held by Calvinists, really is." (*Synod of Dort*, p. 64.)

The Rev. Dr. Beecher says, in his work on

Skepticism: "I have *never heard* a *correct* statement of the Calvinistic system from an opponent;" and, after specifying some alleged instances of misrepresentation, he adds: "It is needless to say that falsehoods *more absolute* and *entire* were never stereotyped in the foundry of the father of lies, or with greater industry worked off for gratuitous distribution from age to age."

The Rev. Dr. Musgrave, in what he calls a *Brief Exposition and Vindication of the Doctrine of the Divine Decrees, as taught in the Assembly's Larger Catechism*, another of the publications of the Presbyterian Board, charges the opponents of Calvinism in general, and the Methodists in particular, with not only *violently contesting*, but also with *shockingly caricaturing*, and *shamefully misrepresenting* and *vilifying* Calvinism—with "systematic and wide-spread defamation"—with "wholesale traduction of moral character, involving the Christian reputation of some three or four thousand accredited ministers of the gospel." His charity suggests an apology for much of our "misrepresentation of their doctrinal system" on the ground of our "*intel*lectual weakness and want of education;"

but, for our "dishonorable attempts to impair the influence" of Calvinistic ministers, and "injure their churches," he "can conceive of no apology."

The Rev. A. G. Fairchild, D. D., in a series of discourses entitled *The Great Supper*, likewise published by the Presbyterian Board of Publication, complains in these terms: "Sectarian partisans are interested in misleading the public in regard to our real sentiments, and hence their assertions should be received with caution. Those who would understand our system of doctrines, must listen, not to the misrepresentations of its enemies, but to the explanations of its friends." (p. 40.) Again: "As these men cannot wield the civil power against us, they will do what they can to punish us for holding doctrines which they cannot overthrow by fair and manly argument. God only knows the extent to which we might have to suffer for our religion, were it not for the protection of the laws! For, if men will publish the most wilful and deliberate untruths against us, as they certainly do, for no other offence than an honest difference of religious belief, what would they not do

if their power were equal to their wickedness?" (p. 73.)

This writer expresses his sense of the "wickedness of those who oppose Calvinism" in still stronger terms: "If, then, the doctrines of grace [Calvinism] are plainly taught in the Scriptures, if they accord with the experience of Christians, and enter largely into their prayers, then it must be exceedingly sinful to oppose and misrepresent them. Those who do this will eventually be found *fighting against God.* We have recently heard of persons praying publicly against the election of grace, and we wonder that their tongues did not cleave to the roof of their mouth in giving utterance to the horrid imprecation." (p. 178.) Ah! These Methodists are very wicked!

The Rev. L. A. Lowry, author of a recent work, entitled *Search for Truth*, published by the same high authority, discourses as follows:—

"When I see a man trying to distort the proper meaning of words, and presenting a garbled statement of the views of an opponent, I take it as conclusive evidence that he has a bad cause; more when he is constantly at it,

and manifests in all that he does a feeling of uneasiness and hostility towards those who oppose him. During my brief sojourn in the Cumberland Church, I was called upon to witness many such exhibitions, that, in the outset of my ministerial labors, made anything but a favorable impression on my mind. I found there, in common with all others who hold to Arminian sentiments, the most uncompromising and *malignant* opposition to the doctrines of the Presbyterian Church, while there was *not* a man that I met in all my intercourse, that *could* state fairly and fully what those doctrines are. Their views were entirely one-sided; the truth was garbled to suit their convenience; and the creations of their own fruitful fancy were constantly being presented before the minds of the people, thereby deepening their prejudices, and drawing still closer the dark folds of their mantle of ignorance and bigotry." (pp. 65, 66.)

Again: "It is painful to witness the ignorance and stupidity of men—their malignity and opposition to the truth—who have learned to misrepresent and abuse Calvinism with such bitterness of feeling, till, like a rattlesnake in

dog-days, they have become blinded by the poison of their own minds." (p. 156.)

In this attempt to destroy confidence in the veracity of Arminians, so far, at least, as it is connected with their representations of Calvinism, leading individuals are singled out for special animadversion. Dr. Miller assails the moral character of Arminius. He says of him that, "On first entering upon his professorship, he seemed to take much pains to remove from himself all suspicion of heterodoxy, by publicly maintaining theses in favor of the received doctrines; doctrines which he afterwards zealously contradicted. And that he did this contrary to his own convictions at the time, was made abundantly evident afterwards by some of his own zealous friends. But, after he had been in his new office a year or two, it was discovered that it was his constant practice to deliver one set of opinions in his professional chair, and a very different set by means of private confidential manuscripts circulated among his pupils." (*Synod of Dort*, p. 13.)

Dr. Fairchild speaks thus of a passage by Mr. Wesley: "In the doctrinal *Tracts*, p. 172, is an address to Satan, which we have no hesi-

tation in saying is fraught with the most concentrated blasphemy ever proceeding from the tongue or pen of mortal, whether Jew, Pagan, or Infidel, and all imputed to the Calvinists. One cannot help wondering how such transcendent impieties ever found their way into the mind of man; I am not willing to transfer the language to these pages; but the work is doubtless accessible to most readers, having been sown broadcast over the land." (*Great Supper*, p. 150.) He also indorses the charge of forgery which Toplady made against Mr. Wesley. (See p. 111.)

The late Dr. Fisk is charged with garbling the *Confession of Faith* for sinister purposes (p. 111); and with "scandalous imputations" against Calvinism. (p. 150.)

It is not impossible that our Calvinistic brethren should be misrepresented. Nor is it impossible that they should misrepresent both themselves and others. I do not admit that they are thus misrepresented by their Methodist opponents, but it is not my intention to refute these charges at this time. I refer to them now to justify the special caution which I shall observe in presenting their tenets. They make

it necessary for us to prove beyond the possibility of doubt that they hold the doctrines which we impute to them. I shall give their views in their own words.

Calvin says, in his *Institutes:* "Whoever, then, desires to avoid this infidelity, let him constantly remember that, in the creatures, there is no erratic power, or action, or motion, but that they are *so governed* by the secret counsel of God, that *nothing can happen* but what is subject to his knowledge, and DECREED *by his will.*" (Vol. i. p. 186.)

Again: "All future things being uncertain to us, we hold them in suspense, as though they might happen either one way or another. Yet, this remains a *fixed principle* in our hearts, that *there will be* NO *event which God has not* ORDAINED." (*Ib.* p. 193.)

Again: "They consider it absurd that a man should be blinded by the will and command of God, and afterwards be punished for his blindness. They, therefore, evade this difficulty, by alleging that it happens only by the permission of God, and not by the will of God; but God himself, by the most unequivocal declarations, rejects this subterfuge. That men, however,

can effect NOTHING but by the secret *will* of *God*, and can *deliberate* upon nothing but what he has *previously decreed*, and DETERMINES by his *secret direction*, is proved by express and innumerable testimonies." (*Ib.* p. 211.)

Again: "If God simply foresaw the fates of men, and did not also *dispose* and *fix* them by his *determination*, there would be room to agitate the question, whether his providence or foresight rendered them at all necessary. But, since he foresees future events only in consequence of *his decree that they shall happen*, it is useless to contend about foreknowledge, while it is evident that ALL *things come to pass rather* by ORDINATION and DECREE." (Vol. ii. p. 169.)

Again: "I shall not hesitate, therefore, to confess plainly, with Augustine, 'that the *will* of God is the *necessity of things*, and that *what* he has *willed* will *necessarily come to pass*.'" (*Ib.* p. 171.)

Again: "With respect to his secret influences, the declaration of Solomon concerning the heart of a king, that it is inclined hither or thither according to the Divine will, certainly extends to the whole human race, and is as much as though he had said, that WHATEVER

CONCEPTIONS we form in our minds, they are *directed* by the *secret* INSPIRATION of GOD." (*Ib.* p. 213.)

Finally, for the present: "*What God decrees*," says this celebrated writer, "must NECESSARILY *come to pass*." (*Ib.* p. 194.)

I think it will not be said, by any one who has heard me attentively, that I either misrepresent, or misunderstand, Calvin, when I impute to him the doctrine that God has purposed, decreed, determined, foreordained, predestinated whatsoever comes to pass, and that he in some way or other brings to pass whatever occurs.

But it may be objected that we ought not to hold modern Calvinists responsible for all the doctrines of Calvin; that they "no further indorse them than as they are incorporated into their acknowledged creeds." To this we cordially assent. By this rule we will abide. What, then, is the language of the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, the established standard of orthodoxy in the American Presbyterian Churches? The third chapter commences thus: "God, from all eternity, did, by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely and un-

changeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass" (p. 15); and, at the commencement of the fifth chapter, we read: "God, the great Creator of all things, doth uphold, direct, dispose, and govern all creatures, actions, and things, from the greatest even to the least, by his most wise and holy providence."

Observe, he, according to this statement, not only *upholds* and *governs* all creatures, but *directs* and *disposes* all *actions* and things, from the *greatest* even to the *least*.

The *Larger Catechism* says, in answer to the question, "What are the decrees of God?" "God's decrees are the wise, free, and holy acts of the counsel of his will, whereby, from all eternity, he hath, for his own glory, unchangeably foreordained *whatsoever comes to pass in time*, especially concerning angels and men."

The *Shorter Catechism* answers the same question by these words: "The decrees of God are, his eternal purpose according to the counsel of his will, whereby, for his own glory, he hath foreordained *whatsoever comes to pass*."

The next question in this Catechism is: "How doth God execute his decrees?—*Ans.* God exe-

cuteth his decrees in the works of creation and providence."

In a work, entitled *An Exposition of the Confession of Faith of the Westminster Assembly of Divines*, by the Rev. Robert Shaw, published by the Presbyterian Board of Publication, and revised by the Committee of Publication, we find the following passages: "That God *must have decreed all future things* is a conclusion which flows necessarily from his foreknowledge, independence, and immutability." (p. 58.)

Again: "The decrees of God relate to all future things without exception; *whatever is done in time was foreordained before the beginning of time.*" (p. 59.)

Again: "If from all eternity he knew all things that come to pass, then from eternity he *must* have *ordained* them" (p. 60). Again: "The foreknowledge of God will necessarily infer a decree; for God could not foreknow that things would be, unless he had decreed they should be." (p. 59.)

In another publication of this Board, entitled *Fisher's Catechism*, we find the following questions and answers:—

"*Q.* What are the decrees of God?—*Ans.*

The decrees of God are his eternal purpose, according to the counsel of his will, whereby, for his own glory, he hath *foreordained whatsoever comes to pass.*" (p. 51.)

"*Q.* Are all the decrees of God then unchangeable?—*Ans.* Yes: from all eternity, he hath, for his own glory, unchangeably foreordained whatsoever comes to pass." (p. 53.)

"*Q.* Does anything come to pass in time but what was decreed from eternity?—*Ans.* No: for the *very reason why anything* comes to pass in time, is *because God decreed* it." (p. 54.)

"*Q.* Are things that are casual or accidental positively decreed?—*Ans.* Yes." (*Ib.*)

"*Q.* What has the decree of God fixed with respect to man's continuance in this world?—*Ans.* It has *immovably fixed* the precise moment of *every* one's *life* and *death*, with *every particular circumstance thereof.*" (*Ib.*)

"*Q.* How does God execute his decrees?—*Ans.* God executes his decrees in the works of creation and providence." (p. 57.)

"*Q.* What is it for God to execute his decrees?—*Ans.* It is to bring them to pass; or give an *actual being* in *time*, to what he *purposed from eternity.*" (*Ib.*)

"*Q.* Does not God leave the execution of his decrees to second causes?—*Ans.* Whatever use God may make of second causes, in the execution of his decrees, yet they are *merely tools* in his overruling hand, to bring about his glorious designs, and must do all his pleasure." (*Ib.*)

"*Q.* Are there not certain means by which the decrees of God are executed?—*Ans.* Yes; but these *means* are *decreed* as *well* as *the end.*" (p. 52.)

"*Q.* Is there an exact harmony or correspondence, between God's decree and the execution of it?—*Ans.* When the thing decreed is brought actually into being, it *exactly corresponds* to the idea or platform of it *in* the infinite *mind* of *God.*" (p. 57.)

"*Q.* Can none of the decrees of God be defeated or fail of execution?—*Ans.* By no means." (*Ib.*)

"*Q.* Does God's governing providence include in it his *immediate concurrence* with every action of the creature?—*Ans.* Yes; God not only *efficaciously concurs* in *producing* the action, as to the matter of it; but likewise *predetermines* the creature to such or such an action, and *not to another, shutting up all other*

ways of acting, and leaving *that only open* which he had *determined* to be done." (p. 67.)

"*Q.* Why are the decrees of God said to be *absolute?—Ans.* Because they depend upon no condition without God himself, but entirely and solely upon his own sovereign will and pleasure." (p. 52.)

On page 67 he tells us.that "the *worst action* that was ever *committed*, the *crucifying* of the Lord of glory, was *ordered* and *directed* by God."

The Rev. Dr. Musgrave says, &c.: "In the former chapter, we endeavored to explain and prove the three following propositions:—

"1. That *all things that come to pass* in time, have been *eternally* and *unchangeably foreordained*, because most certainly foreknown to the infinitely perfect Jehovah." (p. 18.)

The Rev. Dr. Boardman, of this city, in his discourses on the doctrine of election, not only quotes with approbation that part of the Confession of Faith which says, "God, from all eternity, did, by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass" (p. 49), but also says: "Some persons appear to think that the

Divine decrees are restricted to spiritual matters. This is so far from being a correct opinion, that the Scriptures represent ALL EVENTS, however *trivial*, as being embraced in those decrees." In this connection, he also affirms "that the Divine decrees embrace not only *ends* but *means*, and that both in temporal and spiritual things, where an end is decreed, the *means* by which it is to be reached or accomplished are *also decreed*." (pp. 56, 57.)

Dr. Chalmers, in his discourse on Predestination, says: "Let us not conceive that the *agency* of *man* can bring about *one single iota* of *deviation* from the *plans* and the *purposes* of *God*, or that he can be compelled to vary in a single case by the movement of any of those subordinate beings whom he hath himself created. There may be a diversity of operations, but it is God who worketh all in all. Look at the resolute and independent man, and you then see the purposes of the human mind entered upon with decision, and followed up by vigorous and successful exertions. But these *only make up one diversity of God's operations.* The *will of man*, active, and spontaneous, and fluctuating as it appears to be, is an *instrument*

in his hand—and he turns it at his pleasure—and he brings other instruments to act upon it—and he plies it with all its excitements—and he measures the force and proportion of each of them—and *every step* of *every individual* receives as *determinate* a *character* from the *hand of God*, as every mile of a planet's orbit, or every gust of wind, or every wave of the sea, or every particle of flying dust, or every rivulet of flowing water. This power of God knows no exception. It is absolute and unlimited, and while it embraces the vast, it carries its *resistless* influence to all the minute and unnoticed diversities of existence. It reigns and operates through all the secrecies of the inner man. *It gives birth to every purpose. It gives impulse to every desire. It gives shape and color to every conception.* It wields an entire ascendency over every attribute of the mind, and the will, and the fancy, and the understanding, with all the countless variety of their hidden and fugitive operations, are submitted to it."

It may be supposed that while we have shown clearly and indubitably that the doctrine which we propose to examine and refute is held by Old School Presbyterians, it would be an act of

injustice upon our part, should we impute it to those of the New School. Many think that the New School have rejected the leading doctrines of Calvinism, as set forth in the Confession of Faith. This is a very erroneous impression. A writer in the *Presbyterian Quarterly Review*—a work recently originated and sustained by New School Presbyterians—remarks as follows: "Whatever difficulties there may be in the philosophy of the fact, it is certain that the idea of Presbyterianism actuates itself theologically in Calvinism." (Vol. i. No. I. p. 18.)

Again: "So far as we are informed, there is not a minister of our body who does not love and cherish the Westminster Confession of Faith as the best human delineation of Biblical theology." (p. 5.)

Again: "After fifteen years, in the body with which we are connected, no man has moved to alter a tittle of the Confession of Faith." (p. 3.)

Again: "As we love the Confession of Faith and the Catechisms, we shall stand ready to vindicate them from Arminian, Socinian, and infidel assaults on the one side, as well as Antinomian *glosses* on the other." (p. 10.)

Again: "We must then, if we would obey the voice of God's providence, teach our children the priceless glories of their faith" (p. 152). "Who tells them that the Westminster Confession of Faith is a model of noble writing?" (p. 153.)

The *Westminster Confession of Faith*, with the *Catechisms*, has recently been republished by the authority of the New School General Assembly, as the creed of their Church. Had they made any material changes in their creed, so far as Calvinism is concerned, this would have been the time to manifest them. But the New School *Confession of Faith* is a mere reprint of that of the Old School.

The Rev. Albert Barnes, in a sermon in behalf of the American Home Missionary Society, preached in New York and in Philadelphia, says of that institution: "It cannot be denied, it need not be denied, that the form of Christianity which it seeks and expects to propagate, is that which has been much spoken against in the world, and known as the Calvinistic form, and that it expects to make its way because there are minds in every community that are likely to embrace Christianity in that form, because

it is presumed that the more mind is elevated, and cultivated, and brought into connection with schools and colleges, the more likely it will be to embrace that form." (p. 38.)

Again, in a sermon preached before the New School General Assembly, May 20, 1852, he commences a paragraph with these words: "The Calvinistic denomination of Christians, of which we are a part" (p. 12). Again, he says: "As this form of Christianity is represented in the great denominational family to which we belong, it combines two things—the Presbyterian form of government, and the Calvinistic or Augustinian type of doctrine." (*Ib.*)

This eminent writer, whom I hold in very high esteem for his learning, intelligence, and piety, notwithstanding his Calvinism, expresses his views of the Divine decrees in these words:—

"But on this point, the entire movement of the world bears the marks of being conducted according to a plan. We defy a man to lay his finger on a fact which has not such a relation to other facts as to show that it is a part of a scheme; and if of a scheme, *then of a purpose formed beforehand.*" (*Introd. to Butler's Analogy*, p. 53.)

Again: "The event which was thus foreknown, must have been, for some cause, *certain* and *fixed*, since an uncertain event could not possibly be foreknown. To talk of foreknowing a contingent event as certain, which may or may not exist, is an absurdity." (*Notes on Romans*, viii. 29.)

Again: "We interpret the decrees of God, so far as we can do it, by *facts;* and we say that the actual *result*, by whatever means brought about, is the expression of the *design* of God." (*Introd. to Butler's Analogy*, p. 43.)

The *Saybrook Platform and Confession of Faith*, which contains the faith of the New England Congregationalists, holds precisely the same language respecting the Divine decrees, with the Confession of Faith of the Presbyterian Churches.

I am in possession of a work entitled *A Confession of Faith put forth by the Elders and Brethren of many Congregations of Christians (baptized upon profession of their faith) in London and the country;* adopted by the Baptist Association, met at Philadelphia, September 25, 1752. The chapters in this Confession which relate to "God's decree" and "Providence,"

are, with very slight variations of phraseology, not affecting the sense, the same with those in the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, and the *Saybrook Platform*. It is thoroughly Calvinistic.

The *Baptist Catechism*, published by the American Baptist Publication Society, contains the following question and answer:—

"*Q.* What are the decrees of God?—*Ans.* The decrees of God are his eternal purposes, according to the counsel of his will, whereby, for his own glory, he hath foreordained whatsoever comes to pass."

The *Confession of Faith* of the Dutch Reformed Church says: "We believe that the same God, after he had created all things, did not forsake them or give them up to fortune or chance, but that he rules and governs them according to his holy will, so that *nothing happens in this world without his appointment.*" Again: "This doctrine affords us unspeakable consolation, since we are taught thereby, that nothing can befall us by chance, but by the direction of our most gracious and Heavenly Father." Mark, according to this, NOTHING *happens* but with the APPOINTMENT and by the DIRECTION of our *Heavenly Father*.

My hearers will, by this time, be fully convinced that I have not misstated the Calvinistic doctrine of Divine predestination.

The application of this doctrine to the final destinies of men and angels constitutes the Calvinistic doctrine of election and reprobation. Upon this point, Calvin says:—

"Predestination we call the eternal decree of God, by which *he has determined in himself what he would have become of every individual of mankind.* For they are *not all created with a similar destiny*, but *eternal life is foreordained for some*, and *eternal damnation for others.* Every man *therefore being created for one or the other of these ends*, we say he is predestinated either to eternal life or death. (Vol. ii. p. 145.)

Again: "Observe; all things being at God's disposal, and the decision of salvation or death belonging to him, he orders all things by his counsel and decree in such a manner, that *some men are born devoted from the womb to certain death*, that his name may be glorified in their destruction." (*Ib.* 169.)

Again: "I inquire, again, how it came to pass that the fall of Adam, *independent of any remedy*, should involve so many nations with their *infant children* in eternal death, but because

such was *the will of God.* Their tongues, so loquacious on every other point, must here be struck dumb. It is an awful decree, I confess; but no one can deny that God foreknew the future final fate of man before he created him, and that he did foreknow it *because it was appointed by his own decree.*" (*Ib.* 170.)

Upon this point, the *Presbyterian Confession of Faith*, the *Saybrook Platform*, and the *Baptist Confession of Faith*, hold the following language:—

"By the decree of God for the manifestation of his glory, some men and angels are predestinated to everlasting life, and others foreordained to everlasting death.

"Those angels and men, thus predestinated and foreordained, are particularly and unchangeably designed; and their number is so certain and definite, that it cannot be either increased or diminished.

"Those of mankind that are predestinated unto life, God, before the foundation of the world was laid, according to his eternal and immutable purpose, and the secret counsel and good pleasure of his will, hath chosen in Christ, unto everlasting glory, out of his mere free grace and

love, without any foresight of faith or good works, or perseverance in either of them, or any other thing in the creature, as conditions or causes moving him thereunto, and all unto the praise of his glorious grace."

I do not say that Calvinists never contradict any of these statements. Nor do I profess to have spread out the entire theory of Calvinism. The question now relates to their doctrine of Divine decrees.

I am fully convinced that the times demand a review and comparison of the two opposing systems, Calvinism and Arminianism. Our Calvinistic brethren, both Old and New School, are putting forth high claims in behalf of their system, and speaking of ours in very disparaging terms.

The Rev. Albert Barnes tells us, in his sermon in behalf of the Home Missionary Society, preached in 1849, that the more mind is elevated, and cultivated, and brought into connection with colleges and schools, the more likely it will be to embrace the Calvinistic form of Christianity. He thinks that Calvinists will be increased just in proportion as schools and colleges can be founded, and an intelligent and

educated ministry sent out. He does not suppose that the entire mind of the west will embrace Calvinistic views, but he does "expect that a considerable portion of the *educated* and *ruling* mind will" (p. 40). He tells us, in his sermon delivered before the New School General Assembly, convened in Washington in 1852, that past history has shown that the class of minds most likely to embrace the Calvinistic system "is most likely to be found among the thinking, the sober, the educated, the firm, the conservative, and the free" (p. 10); that "the Calvinistic system identifies itself with education, and a large portion of the cultivated mind of a community will be always imbued with the sentiments of the system." (p. 15.)

This seems to imply, whatever may be intended, that Arminianism has special affinities for ignorance; that it is more indebted to ignorance than to intelligence for its diffusion; that its chances for success will be diminished in proportion as sound education advances, and the ministry becomes intelligent. If this be so, Arminians are pursuing a suicidal policy; for no Christian denomination has established as many colleges and academies in the same

length of time as the Methodists. That Arminianism takes better than Calvinism with *the masses* is undeniable; but this may be because it possesses a superior adaptation to the wants of humanity. Our Saviour gave it as a distinctive mark of the ushering in of the last dispensation that the poor have the gospel preached unto them, which implies that the poor, and consequently the uneducated, may understand it.

Mr. Barnes goes further. He intimates that the different theological systems are "the result of some *original peculiarity* in certain classes of minds;" that "there are minds, not a few in number, or unimportant in character, which, when converted, will *naturally* embrace Calvinism." He "will not undertake to say whether John Wesley *could* have been a Calvinist, but he can say that Jonathan Edwards *could never have been anything else.*" He repeats this sentiment three years after, in these words: "There are minds, indeed, and those in *many respects* of a high order, that *will not* [mark the phraseology!] see the truth of the Calvinistic system; but there are minds that *can never* see the truth of an opposite system.

We could not perhaps undertake to say whether John Wesley could ever have been a Calvinist, but we *can* say that Jonathan Edwards could never have been anything else; and if there be a mind in any community formed like that of Edwards, we anticipate that it will embrace the same great system which he defended."

Now it is inconceivable that Mr. Barnes should consider the Arminian superior or equal to the Calvinistic mind. That must be the best mental structure which is most in harmony with the best theory. The tenor of his remarks indicates clearly his opinion upon this point.

I can hardly express the astonishment which I felt upon reading this strange sentiment from so justly distinguished a writer. It appeared to me to be grossly unphilosophical, implying either that truth is not homogeneous; that contradictory propositions may be equally true; or that God has constituted some minds falsely. It is presumable that between truth and mind, in its original normal condition—mind not perverted by erroneous education, or prejudice, or passion, or depravity in any form—there will be a strict congeniality, so that truth will be preferred to error. But this doctrine implies

that one set of minds will, under the same circumstances, from their peculiar natural constitution, prefer the truth, and another set reject it. It is obviously of very dangerous practical tendency. While the Calvinist may refer to it to account for his being a Calvinist, and the Arminian to account for his being an Arminian, the infidel may claim that it is from the same cause that he is an infidel. His rejecting the Bible is the natural inevitable result of the peculiar mental constitution which God gave him.

Mr. Barnes tells us that Calvinism does not appeal to passion; but, if I am not very greatly mistaken, and you may judge whether I am or not, its advocates appeal very significantly to pride of intellect. It offers gross flattery as the price of adhesion and support. What else can be inferred from the passages which I have quoted, than that by becoming Calvinists you will class yourselves with minds of a superior structure, and with the educated and cultivated, and will occupy an elevation from which you can look down upon the less favored Arminians?

A writer in the New School *Quarterly Review* has this remark: "Our physical frame could

about as well be erect, and adapted for its purposes without a back-bone, as piety be complete without Calvinism." (Vol. i. No. I. p. 19.)

The Rev. Mr. Lowry, in his *Search for Truth*, claims that "the doctrine of human depravity—the complete ruin of man—the justice of his condemnation—the legal or covenant relation of Adam and his posterity—the necessity of an atonement—and its vicarious nature," "belong exclusively to the Calvinistic system." He admits that the "Arminian often makes use of the same phraseology as the Calvinist," but then he rejects the "proper and scriptural sense." "The Arminian," he says, "attempts to connect with his system the doctrine of a vicarious atonement, because the phrase is a popular one, and he cannot well do without it; but when we come to examine its meaning, we find that he has no claim to it whatever. He may hold on to the name, but nothing more. The substance is as different from the view which forms a part of his creed, as a city on the Atlantic coast differs from a small village in the backwoods." (pp. 55, 56.)

Again: "The principles which lie at the foundation of the Arminian doctrine of *ability*

and *grace*, are not only calculated to destroy the energies of the Church, and unhinge the institutions of society, as I have endeavored to show, but they go still further; they enter the Christian's closet, and destroy the life and soul of his private devotions. They are calculated to dry up every fountain, and destroy every spring of religious feeling and action." (p. 86.)

Again: "Arminians are without any consistent and harmonious system of doctrine. It is true that, on speaking of the doctrines of those who hold to Arminian sentiments, we are in the habit of using the word *system*, but it is only as a matter of convenience and courtesy. Some of those doctrines may sustain a logical connection with others—such as the doctrine of falling from grace, and the denial of divine efficiency in conversion and sanctification—but Arminianism, as a whole, is a coat of many colors, that has been patched and pieced since the days of Pelagius, according to the taste and caprice of the man that wears it." (p. 156.)

Again: "It requires but half an eye to see, that the view of the fall of man and the relation we sustain to Adam, as found in the standards of the Methodist Church, vitiate the whole

Gospel scheme; that the principles growing ou of the view there presented, lead to fundamenta error with regard to the nature of virtue an vice, and destroy all human accountability; tha the nature of the remedy found in the sam standards necessarily destroys all motive to in telligent action and labor upon the part of th Church in the great work before her, holds ou no encouragement to prayer; degrades the cha racter of God to that of a debtor and apologis for injuries he has done to the creature; an exalts the creature to heaven by a kind of semi ommipotence of his own. Such consequences a these I say are *dangerous and ruinous.*" (p 157.)

This book derives its importance from it being adopted by the Presbyterian Board o Publication, and its bearing the *imprimatur* o that institution. It is commended by their ca talogue as "well worthy of perusal by thos who have doubts as to the scriptural characte of those doctrines which ignorance and preju dice brand as 'the horrible dogmas of Calvin ism.'" It was published in 1852.

A writer in the *Presbyterian*, of June 25 1853, thus expresses his views of Arminianism

"Did we preach Arminianism to the people, we could get ten into our churches where we now get one; for it must be remembered that Arminianism is far more palatable to depraved nature than Calvinism." Again: "These brethren go too fast, get men into the visible kingdom too soon; lull them to everlasting sleep by their soporific measures and doctrinal anodynes, thereby breaking down the barriers which separate the Church from the world, and ruining hundreds of souls where they save one. Let our young men be made to feel rather that Arminianism is a dangerous delusion wherever it is preached, and uphold with all their might and main real old-fashioned Calvinism."

It is a very common thing with Calvinists to refer opposition to Calvinism to depravity, as its source. The *Presbyterian Banner*, for Nov. 5, 1853, contains the following: "The natural heart recoils from predestination. The ungodly hate it. Our whole system is too humbling to human pride to find friends even among the vicious. This is to us a strong affirmation of its truth."

They also claim for Calvinism that it is not only specially conducive to civil and religious

liberty, but that it is essential thereto. The Rev. Dr. Wilson, of the New School Presbyterian Church, in an address delivered before the literary societies of Delaware College, in 1852, went out of his way to eulogize Calvinism in these terms: "Calvinism and human liberty flourish side by side, or rather the latter is not found without the former; and nowhere at this hour is there *true freedom*, true independence of opinion in Church or State where Calvinism is not the foundation." Calvinists must be very forgetful of their history, or they must suppose that all others are ignorant or forgetful of it. But it is not my intention, at present, to reply to this extravagant pretension.

I do not object to the publication of these views from the pulpit and the press. If our brethren entertain them, they have a right to publish them. It is manly to do so. But it may be obligatory upon us to stand up for what we believe to be the truth, and to oppose what we believe to be error. I shall endeavor to do so, the Lord being my helper.

DISCOURSE II.

"In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will."—EPH. i. 11.

IN the preceding discourse, I called attention to the fact that the opponents of Calvinism are frequently charged with misunderstanding through ignorance, or grossly misrepresenting it. I read passages from several, charging us with calumny, defamation, slander, and even blasphemy.

In view of these charges, often made and reiterated, and widely spread, with high official sanction, and likely to be repeated whenever Calvinism is boldly investigated, I deemed it necessary to show, by numerous quotations, that I do not misrepresent it when I impute to it the doctrine that God has willed, proposed, and decreed whatsoever comes to pass, and

that, in some way or other, he brings to pass whatever occurs. For this purpose, I referred to the acknowledged publications of the Presbyterian, Congregational, Baptist, and Reformed Dutch Churches. I noted, particularly, that this doctrine is held by the New School Presbyterians, because it is supposed by many that they have abandoned it, and that their rejection of it constitutes one of the points of difference between them and the Old School.

I also quoted largely to show that earnest efforts are in progress to exalt Calvinism, and disparage Arminianism and Arminians.

We now propose to test this dogma of Calvinism by reason and Scripture. We shall not, at present, enter upon the examination of the proof-texts, though we hold the Holy Scriptures to be the ultimate authority on all theological questions, but shall compare it with acknowledged Scripture principles. And, yet, it may be very reasonably expected that some attention will be paid to the passage which, according to custom, has been selected as presenting the subject of discourse. It is the very first proof-text adduced by the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, but it fails to meet the

demand made upon it. It does not contain the doctrine sought to be proved. It does, indeed, assert the predestination of believers to certain blessings, a point not in dispute, and also that they are predestinated to these blessings according to God's purpose; but all this is very far from teaching that *God has foreordained whatsoever comes to pass.* The proof is supposed by some to be contained in the remaining portion of the passage—"who worketh all things," &c. But we must take the entire expression of the apostle in order to get his meaning, "who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." By this he means to say, merely, that, in whatever God does towards men or angels, he is uncontrolled. He carries out his own free purposes. He does not conform to the counsels of others. He does not yield to the clamors of discontented subjects, or make concessions to contemporary and independent powers. The words are thus paraphrased by McKnight, a Calvinistic commentator: "According to the gracious purpose of him, who effectually accomplisheth all his benevolent intentions, by the most proper means, according to the wise determination of his own will." We may, with as much propriety, argue

from the apostolic injunction, "Do all things without murmurings and disputings" (Phil. ii. 14), that Christians are required by the law of God to *do all things* absolutely, as, from the clause under consideration, that God has decreed and executes whatsoever comes to pass. But, if our brethren insist upon so understanding the apostle, we shall hold them to their interpretation. We shall not allow them to contradict it whenever the exigencies of the argument may render it convenient.

1. In the first place, this theory of predestination is inconsistent with the doctrine of man's free moral agency. The force of this objection is readily perceived. It is *impossible* that we should be free agents, when all the *external circumstances* that affect us, and all our *mental* and *bodily acts*, are predetermined and brought about by God. Man is thus reduced to a mere passive instrument. He is nothing more than a complicate and curious machine — a man-machine, an automaton — whose every movement is conceived, determined, directed, controlled by a supervisor. It avails nothing to apply to him terms which signify freedom. We may say that he has *the power to*

will; that he *actually wills;* but the difficulty is not relieved. The being who endowed him with this faculty has foreordained and brings to pass, by a well-directed agency, every movement of that faculty. We may say that he *wills according to his inclinations,* and is therefore free; but God has decreed and brings to pass all his inclinations. We may say that he *acts* according to his will, and not against his will; still nothing is gained, since all his purposes, and the movements by which he executes them, are equally preordained and brought to pass by God. We may say that he is *conscious* of *acting freely,* but this is a mere delusion, if the doctrine we are considering be true. By the very logic which reconciles it with free agency in man, I will undertake to prove that every steamboat and every railroad-engine is a free agent. Calvinistic free agency must be something analogous to Bishop Hughes's freedom of conscience, indestructible and inviolable, in its very nature and essence; so that a man may be denied the privilege of reading the Bible, or of propagating or entertaining any opinions contrary to the Church of Rome—he may be thrown into prison, and put to torture, for re-

fusing to subscribe to its dogmas, or to worship according to forms which he holds to be idolatrous—and yet he enjoys freedom of conscience. So, according to the teachings of modern Calvinism, man is a free agent, notwithstanding all the *circumstances* which *surround* him, with all his *sensations*, *emotions*, *desires*, *purposes*, *volitions* and *acts* were *decreed from eternity*, and brought to pass by a power which he can *neither control* nor *resist*. This free agency must then be something absolutely inviolable in its nature and essence, something which God himself cannot destroy or impinge except by terminating the existence of the being in whom it inheres. As Bishop Hughes's freedom of conscience is very different from what is generally understood to be freedom of conscience, so the free agency which may be made to harmonize with this doctrine, is different from what is usually understood to be free agency. It is not the power to act otherwise than as we do act, or to choose or will otherwise than as we do choose or will.

2. This doctrine, being at variance with man's free agency, is, by necessary consequence, at variance with his *moral accountability*. There would be as much reason in holding the *atmo-*

sphere accountable, or the *trees*, or the *grass*, or the *clods*, or the *stones*. All his *views*, *feelings*, and *volitions*, being thus predetermined, he can no more be accountable for them than for the *circumstances* of his *birth*, or the *natural color* of his *skin*. He cannot reasonably be made the subject of commendation or censure—of reward or punishment.

3. It also follows, from this doctrine, that there is not, and cannot be any such thing as sin. If man be not a free agent—if he be incapable of acting otherwise than as predetermined by Jehovah—he is incapable of either virtue or vice. It would be as reasonable to predicate virtue or vice of the flux and reflux of the tides, or the circulation of the blood, as of man or angel under such circumstances.

And, mark! if we, for the sake of the argument, should admit that man is capable of *virtue*, notwithstanding all his acts are foreordained and rendered infallibly certain by a power which he cannot successfully resist, he is still incapable of *vice*. He cannot sin, for this plain, all-sufficient reason—he cannot act otherwise than according to the will of God. "Nothing comes to pass in time but what was decreed from

eternity." "None of the decrees of God can be defeated or fail of execution." So Calvinism explicitly affirms.

Further, while the inference that there is and can be no sin is fairly deducible from the supposition that man is not a free agent, it does not depend upon that supposition. Let it be admitted, for the purpose of the argument, that man is a free agent, and capable of sinning, notwithstanding all his actions were predetermined, and what is the state of the case? *Still he has not sinned.* He has done nothing but what God freely willed and ordained he should do. The perfect obedience of Christ consisted in his doing in all respects the will of the Father. Either, then, it may be sinful to do the will of God, or there is—there can be no sin. I do not know of any way in which this consequence can be avoided. I do not believe that it can.

Let us take another view of this point. Let the advocates of this doctrine succeed in proving that man is a free agent, in the proper sense of the term, and capable of sinning, notwithstanding all his actions are decreed and brought to pass by God, and we have before us this remarkable result: *Every individual of the human*

race, while in a state of probation, without a knowledge of God's predetermination respecting him, and without any controlling influence brought to bear upon him, has, in every instance, willed and acted in accordance with the will of God. The result is *universal voluntary holiness*. Here, then, is a dilemma. Either there is *no possibility of sin or of holiness*, or, if there be a possibility of sin or of holiness, there is, in fact, *no sin*—there is, in fact, *universal holiness*.

4. If it be asserted that sin exists, notwithstanding this perfect coincidence between the will of God and the conduct of his creatures, it will follow, most conclusively, that *God is the author of sin*. He has decreed and brings to pass all the sensations, perceptions, emotions, inclinations, volitions, and overt actions, of the whole human race. Various attempts have been made to avoid this result, but they are all futile. The *Confession of Faith* says: "God, from all eternity, did, by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass; yet so as thereby neither is God the author of sin." We pay all respect to this as a disclaimer. Our Presbyterian brethren do not intend to charge God with

being the author of sin. But we are compelled to regard these propositions as directly contradictory to each other. Is not a being the author of that which he originally designs and decrees, and subsequently brings into existence? and is it not maintained that he decreed from all eternity, and brings to pass whatever occurs? Either sin has not come to pass, or God is the author of it. It is useless to say that God has brought to pass the act, but not the sinfulness. The sinfulness has come to pass. It is useless to say that sin is man's, and not God's act. Man does nothing but what God has decreed, and, in some infallible way leads him to do. "God's power," says Dr. Chalmers, "gives birth to *every purpose;* it gives impulse to *every desire*, gives shape and color to *every conception.*" Says Fisher, in his *Catechism:* "God not only efficaciously concurs in producing the action as to the matter of it, but likewise predetermines the creature to such or such an action, and not to another, shutting up all other ways of acting, and leaving only that open which he had determined to be done." We might, with vastly more plausibility, deny that Paul was the author of his Epistles, because he employed an amanuensis, or, for the

same reason, deny that Milton was the author of *Paradise Lost.* It is useless here to speculate upon the reasons which induced God to ordain and bring sin to pass. We are now concerned with the fact merely, and we hence conclude that he is the author of sin and the only being properly answerable for it.

5. If the advocates of this doctrine should still insist that it does not make God the author of sin; that man is a free agent, and properly responsible for his actions, notwithstanding they are foreordained; I press them with this plain consequence—God is, to say the least, a participant in the sinning. And he is not merely a *coadjutor*, but the *principal*—the principal in *every instance of sinning.* He originates the first conception of the sinning act. He forms the plan. He arranges all the circumstances. He, by his providence, applies the influence by which the result is effectuated. Here, then, is a dilemma from which there is no escape. Either God is, *strictly and properly*, the *author of sin*, or he is a *participant* therein, and not merely accessory, but the *principal*, the *plotter*, the *prime mover*, the RINGLEADER thereof.

6. Another inevitable consequence of this

doctrine is that, admitting the existence of sin, God *prefers sin to holiness* in every instance in which sin takes place. This consequence is too plain to require much illustration. If God *freely* ordained whatsoever comes to pass; if he was not under a fatal necessity of ordaining just as he did; if he had it in his power to ordain otherwise, he could have ordained holiness in the place of sin. The fact that he was free and unnecessitated in his decrees, and could ordain the one or the other, according to his good pleasure, is proof substantial that he prefers sin to holiness in every instance in which sin occurs. Had he preferred holiness, he could have decreed it, and it would have come to pass. This consequence has been admitted, and is, by many Calvinists at this day, maintained as a doctrine. In fact, it has been a matter of dispute amongst Calvinists—Dr. Taylor, of Connecticut, taking one side, and Dr. Tyler, of Connecticut, taking the other. But what a shocking conception! (See *Christian Spectator*, vol. iv. p. 465.)

7. Nor can we resist the further conclusion, from these premises, that sin is not a real evil, but, on the contrary, a good, and that in every

instance in which it is preferred to holiness, it is worthy of such preference. This reasoning proceeds upon the assumption that God is a being of infinite goodness and wisdom, and, therefore, always prefers good to evil, being, of course, always able to distinguish the one from the other.

This inference also has been admitted by many of the advocates of Calvinistic predestination. They distinctly affirm that sin is the necessary means of the greatest good, and, as such, so far as it exists, is preferable on the whole to holiness in its stead—that its existence is, on the whole, for the best. I give as authority for this affirmation, a publication of the Presbyterian Board, entitled *Old and New Theology*. On the first page we find this explicit statement: "It has been a common sentiment among New England divines, since the time of Edwards, that sin is the necessary means of the greatest good, and as such, so far as it exists, is preferable, on the whole, to holiness in its stead."

I do not charge Dr. Musgrave with holding this inference as a doctrine, and yet it is very clearly asserted in an argument designed to prove the Calvinistic doctrine of foreordination. "There must," says he, "have been a time

when no creature existed, as God alone is from everlasting. Before creation, and from all eternity, all things that are possible, as well as all things that actually have or will come to pass in time, must have been perfectly known to God. He must, therefore, have known what beings and events would, on the whole, be most for his own glory, and the greatest good of the universe; and therefore, as an infinitely wise, benevolent, and Almighty Being, he could not but have chosen or determined, that such beings and events, and SUCH ONLY, should come to pass in time." "The conclusion is, therefore, to our minds, irresistible, that if God be infinitely wise, benevolent, and powerful, and perfectly foreknew what beings and events would, *on the whole*, BE BEST, he must have chosen and ordained that they should exist, or be permitted to occur; and that, consequently, everything that does actually come to pass in time, has been eternally and unchangeably foreordained."

Here it is argued that God, as an infinitely wise, benevolent, and powerful being, must have *known* and *preferred*, and *decreed*, that just such beings should exist and events occur, as would, on the whole, be most for his own glory, and the

greatest good of the universe, *and such only;* and that, consequently, he has eternally, and unchangeably foreordained everything that does actually come to pass in time. Now it is plain that all the events which have come to pass in time must answer this description—must be for the best, for his highest glory—or the argument falls to the ground.

The Rev. Jas. McChain, one of the editors of the *Calvinistic Magazine*, in a discourse published in that periodical, December, 1847, thus undertakes to prove that God "has foreordained whatsoever comes to pass:" "Jehovah is infinitely *wise;* does he not, therefore, know what it is BEST should take place? He is infinitely *benevolent;* will he not choose, then, that *shall take place* which he knows is FOR THE BEST? He is infinitely *powerful;* can he not, therefore, cause *to take place* what he *chooses shall take place?* The Most High is infinitely wise, and *knows* what it is BEST should come to pass—benevolent, and *chooses* to bring to pass WHAT IS BEST—powerful, and *does* bring to pass what he chooses as BEST." "Surely his infinite wisdom and goodness will choose and determine whatsoever it is best should

take place, and his almighty power will perfectly carry out his plan."

It is not my intention, at this time, to point out the fallacy of these arguments. I quote them to show that the consequence which I have deduced from the doctrine that God has decreed whatsoever comes to pass—that sin is not an evil, but a good, and worthy of being preferred to holiness in every instance in which it occurs —is actually recognized as a truth, and used as a premise in proof of the Calvinistic doctrine of the decrees.

8. And how can we avoid adopting as a legitimate conclusion, the licentious infidel maxim, that "WHATEVER IS, IS RIGHT"?

9. It is obvious, at the first glance, that this doctrine destroys all reasonable ground for repentance. Of what shall we repent? Of sinning? Let it first be proved that, according to this doctrine, any one has sinned, or can sin. But, if sin be possible, yet in every instance of sinning we have done the will of God. He freely and unchangeably predestinated the act from all eternity. His providence brought it to pass. Before we feel ourselves authorized to repent we should be sure that God has repented

of his purposes and acts. And, even then, there would be no good reason for repentance upon the part of his creatures. For, if we, for the sake of the argument, allow that they are able to act otherwise than as they do, notwithstanding the Divine decrees, they are morally bound to submit cordially to those decrees, leaving to God the responsibility of decreeing wisely. Hence there is no room for repentance.

This is precisely the application made of this doctrine by an intelligent Calvinistic lady of New England, Mrs. Elizabeth Stuart Phelps, daughter of the late Prof. Stuart, of Andover, and authoress of certain very popular works. In the memorial of her, prefixed to *The Last Leaf of Sunny Side*, she is quoted as saying in her diary: "I never *could* understand or divine before, my claim upon the Deity's overruling care. Now I do get a glimpse of it—enough to make me feel like an infant in its mother's arms. Every event, of every day, of every hour, is unalterably fixed. Each day is but the turning over a new leaf of my history, already written by the finger of God—every letter of it. Should I wish to re-write—to alter—one? Oh, no! no!! no!!!" Here, you perceive, is

no ground for repentance. It is repudiated. She would not alter an event of her life, a letter of her history. She carries this acquiescence in the Divine decrees so far as to say in another place: "I have no hope but in my Saviour; and if He has not saved me, then this too, I know, is just, and God's decrees I would not change."

10. Nor can prayer be more reasonable than repentance. For what shall we pray? That God would reverse his eternal decrees? This would be to reflect upon his attributes. Are his decrees wrong? Besides, the doctrine in question affirms them to be unchangeable. Shall we pray that God may accomplish them? This can add nothing to the certainty of their accomplishment; for they cannot be defeated. So we are distinctly assured by the advocates of this theory. The only apology that can be offered for prayer, on the part of those who believe this doctrine, is that it is decreed they shall pray. But a prayer offered in strict logical accordance with this theory would be a manifest absurdity.

11. Another legitimate consequence of this doctrine is that man is not in a state of probation.

There is a flat contradiction between the idea that man is in a state of probation and the affirmation that the whole series of volitions, states, actions, and events of his life is fixed, unchangeably, by the Divine decree, before he comes into existence. I have long regarded this as an inevitable deduction from the Calvinistic doctrine of decrees, but it was not until lately that I found it actually advanced as a doctrine by a Calvinistic writer. On page 77 of *Fisher's Catechism*, the following occurs:—

"*Q.* Is there any danger in asserting that man is not now in a state of probation, as Adam was?—*Ans.* No."

"*Q.* What, then, is the dangerous consequence of asserting that fallen man is still in a state of probation?—*Ans.* This dangerous consequence would follow, that mankind are hereby supposed to be still under a covenant of works that can justify the doer!"

I do not mean to be understood that this dogma is held by all Calvinists, but, whether held or not, it is a legitimate inference.

12. Let us now notice the bearing of this strange tenet upon some of the leading doctrines and facts of Christianity. Take the doctrine of

the Fall—which is understood to be that God made man in his own image—holy, righteous, capable of standing in his integrity, yet liable to be seduced from it; and that man voluntarily transgressed, brought guilt and depravity upon himself, and involved his posterity in moral degradation and ruin. But, if the Calvinistic doctrine of decrees be true, there was obviously no fall in the case. There was a change in the condition of Adam, but that change was a part of God's eternal plan. Nothing occurred but what belonged to the divinely predetermined series of events. If Adam had acted otherwise than as he did, God's original purposes would have been frustrated. If there were any fall, it should be predicated of the Divine decrees rather than of the human subject thereof.

13. Again: The plan of redemption, it is supposed, was designed to rescue him from a deplorable, desperate condition, in which his perverseness had placed him; but, if the doctrine we are considering be true, the redemption, so called, is nothing but a part of a chain of predetermined events. He *was, and is, at no time,* in *any other condition* than was *devised* and *decreed* by *Jehovah as most conducive to his own*

glory and *the highest good of the universe.* Thus, the redemption, about which so much is said, is resolved into a mere nullity.

14. Again: The glorious doctrine of Christ crucified thrills the bosom of the church with intense emotions of fear, and penitence, and hope, and gratitude, and joy. Paul attached so much importance to it as to say: "For I determined to know nothing among men save Christ and him crucified." But, view it in the light of the doctrine that God has decreed whatsoever comes to pass, and what does it amount to? The sufferings and death of Christ derive their importance from the fact of their being propitiatory—an atonement. But for what shall they atone? For acts which were determined upon, as a part of God's plan, for his glory, and the good of the universe, millions of ages before the human actors were born; for acts which no more need to be atoned for than the actions of Jesus Christ himself. To say that those acts were wrong is to reflect upon the decrees of God, since nothing has come to pass but what was decreed by him;" since, according to Mr. Barnes, we are "to interpret the decrees of God by facts, and the actual

result, by whatever means brought about, expresses the design of God." If men need atonement, they need it for doing the will of God, and for nothing else. Need I add that, in view of the Calvinistic doctrine of decrees, the doctrine of atonement by the sufferings and death of Christ is absolute nonsense?

15. Again: I affirm of this doctrine that it renders utterly baseless the *doctrine of pardon*, or the remission of sins. It renders the offer of pardon a mockery. For what is pardon offered? For *doing the will of God*—for doing just *what he decreed* we should do; for *carrying into effect* his *eternal counsels*. How can any man need pardon if this doctrine be true? Should it be said, in reply, that although the decrees of God have been invariably fulfilled, yet his *precepts* have been violated, I rejoin that the violation of these precepts was, according to the Calvinistic hypothesis, specifically *decreed*. Unless decreed, it could not have come to pass. Hence, the violation was inevitable, from the very nature of the case. God offers pardon to his creatures, who have invariably, from the commencement of their being, fulfilled his decrees. He offers pardon to them

for violating commands which it was impossible for them to keep, inasmuch as he had eternally decreed that they should not keep them, and his decrees are infinitely wise and holy, and cannot be frustrated.

Further, if God's decrees are righteous (and we are told explicitly by the creed we are reviewing that they had their origin in his "wise and holy counsel"), it follows that his precepts must be unrighteous, whenever they are assumed to be in opposition to his decrees; and surely no one can need pardon for pursuing a righteous course in opposition to an unrighteous one. If it be said that his precepts and his decrees are all equally righteous, it follows that a course in direct opposition, in all respects, to a righteous law is, nevertheless, a righteous course, and thus the distinction between righteousness and unrighteousness is destroyed. View the subject in whatever light you may, and the offer of pardon in connection with the Calvinistic doctrine of decrees, becomes an impertinence and an absurdity.

16. And what is the effect of the Calvinistic theory of predestination upon the doctrine of *regeneration?* Regeneration is usually under-

stood to be a change by which unholy dispositions—dispositions at variance with the character and will of God—are substituted by those in accordance therewith. But, if Calvinism be true, regeneration is nothing more than a preordained change from doing the will of God perfectly in one way, to doing it perfectly in another way.

17. A consequence of this theory has been incidentally brought to view in illustrating a preceding argument, which deserves a distinct statement. It is that God has two hostile wills, in relation to the same thing—his decrees, and his published commands and prohibitions. He has enjoined certain modes of action, by the most solemn legislation, and yet decreed, from all eternity, that multitudes of those whom he has subjected to those obligations, shall constantly act at variance therewith; so that multitudes of human beings are doing his will perfectly, and yet violating his will at the same time.

18. This theory makes all civil government manifestly unreasonable. Civil government proceeds upon the supposition that man is a free agent, capable of choosing and acting otherwise

than as he does; but this theory, as we have seen, is incompatible with free agency.

And should we admit, for the sake of the argument, that it is not incompatible with free agency, it is still irreconcilable with civil government. Civil legislation prohibits various modes of acting. It assumes that the forbidden actions are wrong—injurious to society—whereas, this theory represents that all the actions that have been performed, or will be performed, were freely willed, purposed, decreed, foreordained, and brought to pass by God himself—that there are no events, and can be none, but what are in precise harmony with his eternal purposes—so that, unless we suppose that God has from all eternity freely decreed what is wrong and injurious, thereby subjecting human legislators to the necessity of opposing his will in order to prevent outrage and injury, civil legislation admits of no justification or apology.

And if this theory is incompatible with civil legislation, it is not less so with civil jurisprudence. Men assume the right to inflict severe punishment upon their fellow-men for doing what cannot be avoided, or for not doing what

they cannot possibly do. Or, if it be admitted, for the sake of the argument, that they could act otherwise, still they are punished for doing and suffering, in all respects, the will of God, for merely exemplifying his eternal unchangeable decrees. Take either alternative, and human jurisprudence is palpably iniquitous.

The only plausible apology that can be offered in behalf of civil government is, either that human legislators and judges, and jurors, and counsel, and sheriffs, and constables are passive instruments in the hands of God, in which case their proceedings are ludicrous, the actors being mere puppets, exhibiting all the appearance of self-determined motion, and yet, like those famous characters called *Punch* and *Judy*, acting only as determined and effected by the wire-worker; or, admitting that they are free, and executing their own determinations, they too are doing precisely what God has foreordained; so that, in this respect, the jury who pronounce the verdict of guilty, and the judge who pronounces the sentence of death, are upon a level with the alleged criminal. All have done, and are doing, just the things which God

has decreed they should do, neither more nor less.

19. I cannot but regard this theory as subversive of every rational idea of a Divine moral government. Moral government implies precepts or prohibitions, or both, enforced by rewards and penalties, and addressed authoritatively to beings capable of either obedience or disobedience. But of what use are precepts or prohibitions if every act of every individual is fixed beforehand by the Divine decrees? As well might moral codes be addressed to steam-engines or to whirlwinds. The only plausible attempt that can be made to reconcile this theory of predestination with a Divine moral government, is to apply the term moral government to a certain class of preordained influences designed to bring about a certain class of preordained results. But this is moral government in name merely. The process which the advocates of this theory call moral government is just as mechanical as that by which the motions of the planets are controlled. The judiciary system of the Divine government, with all its solemn pageantry, is thus reduced to a mere farce. Beings are arraigned, with great judicial

pomp, and condemned, or approved, punished or rewarded for actions which were decreed innumerable ages before they were born, and brought to pass by influences beyond their control, for actions which were devised, decreed, and irresistibly brought to pass by the judge himself.

20. We are now prepared for another consequence, which hangs like a millstone around the neck of this theory, and is sufficient, of itself, to sink it to the depths. It represents God not only as decreeing one thing and commanding another directly adverse thereto, but also as decreeing and bringing to pass opposite and contradictory events. He ordained that one man should believe the Holy Scriptures, and reverence them, and that another man should, at the same time, deny, and hate, and vilify them. He ordained that men should at one period of their lives preach the gospel, and write in favor of Christianity, and at another period become infidel lecturers and disputants. He decreed that some should believe the Calvinistic doctrine of decrees, and teach it, and that others should, at the same time, regard it as false and oppose it. He has ordained that

men shall take opposite sides on all great questions, religious, philosophical, or political. He ordained the fugitive slave law and the recent Nebraska and Kansas enactment, and all the opposition from ministers and laymen, with which these measures have been regarded. He has ordained that one party shall laud them as just and patriotic, and that another party shall condemn and hate them as diabolical. He ordained the arrest of that man on the suspicion of murder, with all the conflicting opinions as to his guilt or innocence, the contradictory testimony of the witnesses, the contrary pleadings of the counsel, the verdict of the jury pronouncing him guilty, the sentence of the judge condemning him to death, and the pardon of the governor under the full conviction of his innocence. All the conflicting opinions and acts in the fiercest controversy that ever raged, this theory traces up to the Divine foreordination.

21. It must have appeared to the audience, by this time, that the character of God is fearfully involved in this inquiry.

(1). We have already seen that this theory draws after it the logical consequences that God

is the author of sin, or, if not the author of it in the strict and proper sense of the term, at least the plotter—the prime mover of it; that he prefers sin to holiness in every instance in which sin takes place; that he regards sin as the necessary means of the greatest good; that he has, at the same time, two hostile wills relative to the same thing. And now what shall we say of his *wisdom*, when we find him decreeing acts, and bringing them to pass, and yet, peremptorily forbidding them—enjoining acts, by formal solemn legislation, which, from all eternity he has foreordained shall never be performed? When we find him ordaining measures for the promotion, and measures for the counteraction, of his own plans? When we find him ordaining all the contradictions and vacillations by which human conduct is diversified and disgraced?—when every example of the most contemptible folly that ever turned the laugh, or the sneer, or the frown, or the sentiment of pity upon its immediate perpetrators, can be traced to the free counsels and designs of God, and finds its origin there?

(2). What shall we say of the *sincerity* of God when we find him enjoining one class of actions *on pain of* eternal damnation, while yet he has

decreed, and by unfailing means brings to pass, in the same subjects, an entirely opposite class?—when we find him threatening, and expostulating, and professing to be grieved, on account of conduct which had its origin in his own free purposes, and is effected by his own providence?—when we find him engaged in enforcing two wills respecting the same thing, one directly the opposite of the other, one of which must necessarily fail of accomplishment, and then, wrathfully charging the failure upon those who have acted in all respects as he ordained they should?—when we find him offering salvation to all men, and solemnly asseverating that it is his will that all men should come to the knowledge of the truth, while yet the sinning, and ultimate damnation of myriads, were decreed innumerable ages before they existed?

(3). What shall we say of his *holiness*, when the vilest crimes that ever caused the blush of shame, or the feeling of indignation or horror—*fornication*, *adultery*, *bestiality*, *fraud*, *oppression*, *lying*, *murder*—are in perfect coincidence with his eternal purposes, parts of his great plan, when he chose them in preference to their

opposites, with all the means and appliance great and small, by which they were brought pass?

(4). And what shall we say of his *equity* a *justice*, when we find him placing his subjects u der the necessity of violating his will in one w or another, either his secret decrees or his pu lished enactments? When we find him rewar ing one class of his subjects for fulfilling h decrees, and damning another class with eve lasting tortures for doing precisely the sa thing?

(5). And where is his *benevolence*, when freely chooses, prefers, ordains, and brings pass all the sin and misery in the universe?

22. Again: It is obvious that this theory la the foundation of a new system of morals. it be insisted upon that, notwithstanding G has decreed whatsoever comes to pass, he perfectly sincere, just, holy, and benevolent, shall have obtained certain ethical princip which, if carried out into universal practi would subvert all social order, and destroy confidence. For instance, it will follow:—

First. That a ruler may secretly will, p pose, decree, foreordain, that his subjects sh

act in a certain way. He may put into operation effective measures to secure their concurrence with his designs. Meantime, he may profess a profound and insuperable dissatisfaction with a very large proportion of the actions which he has predetermined and induced; he may indignantly condemn and threaten to punish the actors; he may do all this, and yet be perfectly sincere. In other words, what men usually regard as the most thorough-paced duplicity, is in entire accordance with perfect sincerity. By this principle, the worst hypocrite that ever lived may be fully vindicated from the charge of hypocrisy.

Again: A being may give existence to a vast multitude of other beings, inferior, dependent, but yet intelligent. He may assert over their actions the most absolute control. He may predetermine and bring to pass every one of their actions. He may "shut up all other ways of acting, and leave that only open which he had determined to be done." Meanwhile, he may issue laws peremptorily requiring conduct directly opposite to his unchangeable predeterminations, thus placing his creatures under the dire necessity of violating his secret decrees, or

his published laws; and yet he may, with perfect justice, arraign, condemn, and punish them for the violation of these laws, consigning them to eternal misery. This theory will furnish us with a criterion of moral character—a code by which the Neros, Domitians, Caligulas, and Diocletians, whom men have reprobated and abhorred as tyrants, may be triumphantly vindicated and made honorable.

Again: A being may be the author, or, if not, in the strictest sense, the author, at least the planner, the prime mover of all the wickedness that ever existed. He may use effective influences in bringing it to pass, so that it may be said, in truth, that he freely and unchangeably preordained and produced it, and yet he may be perfectly holy.

And again: A being may purpose, foreordain, and bring to pass all the sin and misery in the universe, and yet be perfectly benevolent. Here is a principle of ethics which will more than cover and vindicate the most atrocious cruelties of the Romish inquisition. The rum-seller, so called, who is the agent of incalculable mischief, may find under it the most ample protection. His designs terminate upon the sale

of his liquors, and the gains which result. If he could sell his fiery commodity, and secure his gains without the misery, he would. But, according to our new code of ethical principles, he might go much further. He might design, as an end, all the wretchedness that results, and prosecute his traffic as a means to secure that end, and yet be perfectly benevolent.

Is it not plain that this theory, if adopted and carried out to its legitimate logical results, must revolutionize and reverse all our established conceptions of wisdom, sincerity, holiness, equity, justice, and benevolence, and introduce an entirely new estimate of moral conduct?

23. Further: This theory furnishes the most complete justification of all the conduct of the worst men that ever lived, both by the ethical principles which may be deduced from it, and by the single consideration that their every action is in perfect harmony with the Divine will. The New Testament speaks of men being without excuse; but I ask, what better excuse can be desired than that the conduct in question is in precise accordance with the will of God? Men sometimes think it an apology to say that

they acted hastily—that they were misled by others—that they were not aware of the mischief likely to result from their course; but this doctrine puts them at once upon the highest possible ground of justification. The poor reprobate may be silenced, at the day of judgment, by the terrors which surround him, and by the stern authority of the judge, but *not by the want of a valid plea.* When the sentence shall go forth consigning him to perdition for the deeds done in the body, he will have in readiness, whether allowed to utter it or not, the unanswerable answer: "Lord, the deeds for which I am condemned were in all respects what thou didst predetermine. I have executed from first to last thy wise and holy counsels. Had I acted otherwise, I should have frustrated thy free purposes, formed before the foundation of the world. I have, indeed, gone contrary to thy published law, but that thou didst render inevitable by making that law antagonistic to thy eternal decree, which thou dost not allow to be thwarted, in any instance, by man or angel."

This plea would be equally conclusive before any human tribunal. There are Calvinistic

lawyers, or lawyers who are members of Calvinistic churches or congregations. The names of some of these are appended to a note soliciting for publication Dr. Boardman's sermons on *Election*. In defending alleged criminals, men of their profession often tax their ingenuity to the utmost for arguments. If the insanity of the prisoner can be established, they expect his acquittal, though he may have perpetrated the fatal violence. But why do they never offer, in behalf of the prisoner intrusting his case to them, that he has done nothing but what God willed and decreed from all eternity he should do? that, from the beginning to the end of the affair, he was but executing the counsels of Heaven—counsels which Heaven never suffers to be frustrated, either as to the end, or the instrument. Some of them believe the doctrine, and desire that the public should believe it. Why, then, do they never plead it when pledged to give their client the benefit of every available argument? Is it nothing to be able to say for him that he has not swerved a hair's-breadth from the designs of the great Sovereign of the universe, at whose judgment-seat all the decisions of human tribunals will be reviewed?

They dare not offer such a plea. They know that common sense would laugh them out of countenance, if not out of court. And if all present were believers in the doctrine, they could not attempt to reduce it to its legitimate practical application without laughing in each other's faces—such is its essential absurdity. They may circulate it in sermons, in which eloquent nonsense is drivelled with impunity, but they will not venture to propound it in a court, where common sense and equity bear sway.

24. If this doctrine be true, it is wholly unnecessary for any of you to impose any restraint upon your passions or wills. Are you tempted to indulge in sensuality, or to defraud your neighbor, and even to assassinate him? And does the inquiry arise in your mind whether the act to which you are tempted is according to the will of God? You have only to do it, and the result proves that it is decreed. So says Mr. Barnes: "The result, by whatever means brought about, expresses the design of God." If the act be not decreed, you cannot do it, though you try. If you can, it is decreed *that you should;* and your doing it is as inevitable as destiny itself. So you may just go forward,

and the result will be right; that is, if God's decrees are right.

25. It is also an obvious consequence of this doctrine that no man can contribute anything to his personal salvation; that his salvation or damnation is fixed wholly by the Divine decrees. He cannot influence his destiny by any effort he can make. There is no use in his trying. Indeed, the *Westminster Confession of Faith* informs us directly that man is "altogether passive" in "regeneration," and that his "perseverance" "depends not upon his own free will, but upon the immutability of the decree of election." So that all the exhortations of the gospel and of the pulpit, are utterly irrelevant. There is a very significant passage bearing upon this point in Chalmer's discourse on Predestination: "And now," says he, "you can have no difficulty in understanding how it is that we make our calling and election sure. *It is not in the power of the elect to make their election surer in itself than it really is, for this is a sureness which is not capable of receiving any addition.* It is not in the power of the elect to make it surer to God—for all futurity is submitted to his all-seeing eye, and his absolute

knowledge stands in need of no confirmation. But there is such a thing as the elect being ignorant for a time of their own election, and their being made sure of it in the way of evidence and discovery.". The amount is that a man may ascertain by exertion the fact of his election, but he can do nothing towards securing it. Thus Mr. Wesley's famous consequence is established. "The elect shall be saved, do what they will; the reprobate shall be damned, do what they can." It is plain from these reasonings that this doctrine tends to spiritual inactivity, and countenances licentiousness.

But we are told, by Dr. Boardman, that the Divine "decrees are not the rule of our duty;" that "we are not held responsible for not conforming to them;" that "we are not bound to act with the least reference to them." (p. 45.) What! The subjects of a government not bound to act with the least reference to the decrees of its sovereign!—not responsible for not conforming to them!! This is surely a strange doctrine. It is an indirect concession that the practical bearing of the Calvinistic doctrine of decrees cannot be defended. But it is said that we have no right to make God's secret decrees our

rule. Very true. We are not arguing from his secret decrees, but from what our brethren profess to know. If the doctrine in question be a secret, we would like to know by what authority it is so confidently stated in the *Confession of Faith* and the *Catechism*. How did they come by the knowledge of God's secret decree? They may claim to be better educated than we are, and more intelligent, to have minds of a superior natural constitution; but we protest against their claiming to be intrusted with the secrets of heaven.

26. This wonderful doctrine makes out the devil and his angels to be faithful servants of God. They have done, throughout the past, and are doing now, precisely what God, in his wise and holy counsel, foreordained they should do.

27. It leads to Universalism. If all beings do as God has decreed, upon what ground can God punish any of them, then, in futurity? You have only to connect with this doctrine the declaration that God is benevolent, or just, and Universalism follows.

28. It leads to rank infidelity. It is to my mind more reasonable to believe that God has

made no written revelation of his will, than that he has revealed such a doctrine as this. Let the opinion become prevalent that it is a doctrine of the Bible, and, as the consequence, the Bible will be rejected by thousands, yea, hundreds of thousands. It is impossible for the ablest disputant to maintain a respectable argument against infidelity while standing upon this ground. He must assume the opposite ground, as the basis of his argument, or he will fail signally. The infidel objects to the Bible that it represents God as sanctioning crime, and making favorites of its perpetrators, and hence concludes that it cannot be true.

The usual reply is that, so far from having sanctioned vice and its perpetrators, he has solemnly prohibited it; that he holds the perpetrator guilty, condemns him to severe punishment, and will remit that punishment only in view of repentance, and reformation, and an atonement which fully vindicates the Divine government, and most impressively manifests its abhorrence of the course pursued by the transgressor. But what says this doctrine? That God has freely, and from all eternity *willed, decreed, foreordained, whatsoever* comes to pass.

The infidel objects that the Bible contains contradictions, and hence cannot be the word of God. The usual answer admits that God cannot contradict himself, but denies that the Bible is chargeable with self-contradiction. Whereas, this doctrine declares that God has decreed and brought to pass all the contradictions that were ever uttered. Can it be that God is the author of a book which represents him as ordaining and bringing to pass all the acts of crime and folly that were ever committed, including all the lies that were ever uttered, as having two hostile wills in relation to the same event, as decreeing that his creatures should pursue a certain course, and yet commanding them to pursue a contrary course, and then, damning them, thousands upon thousands, for doing what he decreed they should do? It is impossible for the infidel to frame a stronger argument than this doctrine supplies him with.

I have shown, unanswerably, I think, that this doctrine leads, by obvious deduction, to the doctrine that God prefers sin to holiness in every instance in which sin takes place, and that sin is the necessary means of the greatest good. I will now quote an eminent Calvinistic minister upon the tendencies of this doctrine.

He is commenting upon what he calls "the third solution" of the question, "For what reason has God permitted sin to enter the universe?" which he states to be that "God chose that sin should enter the universe as the necessary means of the greatest possible good. Wherever it exists, therefore, it is, in the whole, better than holiness would be in its place"—the very doctrine which we are told by high Calvinistic authority, has been a "common sentiment among New England divines since the days of Edwards." He says:—

"The third solution has been extensively adopted by philosophers, especially on the continent of Europe; and its ultimate reaction on the public mind had no small share, we believe, in creating that universal skepticism which at last broke forth upon Europe, in all the horrors of the French Revolution. While the profoundest minds were speculating themselves into the belief that sin was the necessary means of the greatest good, better on the *whole*, in each instance, than holiness would have been in its place—common men were pressing the inquiry, 'Why, then, ought it to be punished?' Voltaire laid hold of this state of things, and assuming

the principle in question to be true, carried round its application to the breast of millions. In his *Candide*, one of the most amusing tales that was ever written, he introduces a young man of strong passions and weak understanding, who had been taught this doctrine by a metaphysical tutor. They go out into the world, to 'promote the greatest good' by the indulgence of their passions; certain that, *on the whole*, each sin is better than holiness would have been in its place. But when Candide begins to suffer the natural consequences of his vices, he feels it to be but a poor consolation, that others are now reaping the benefit of his sin. Is it surprising that such a work induced thousands to disbelieve in the holy providence of God, and prepared multitudes to 'do evil that good might come?'" (*Christian Spectator*, vol. i. pp. 378, 9.)

It would be easier, and more reasonable, to believe in a plurality of gods, than that one God should be capable of such conflicting counsels. And this would bring us to the verge of Atheism.

29. This doctrine covers with the wing of its sanction all the errors that were ever promulgated or conceived. I do not say that they

all grow out of it, but that it justifies them. Why should I oppose Romanism, or Universalism, or Socinianism, or Puseyism, or Infidelity, when they are all decreed by Jehovah? Christendom presents the strange spectacle of men prying into systems, bringing to the light, condemning, and holding up to public odium their errors of theory and practice, and, yet, holding as a fundamental article of their own creed that God from all eternity freely decreed whatsoever comes to pass. Let them first reject and refute the error which vindicates all errors. What right has a Calvinist to find fault with anything?

30. Again: It clearly follows, from this theory, that any attempt to prevent the commission of sin in our neighbors, is not only in opposition to the primary—the original will, the eternal purposes of God, but is also in opposition to the highest good of the universe; and that we should, as reasonable beings, rejoice in every instance of sin—of lying, robbery, uncleanness, and murder—as in every instance of holiness.

31. I do not identify this doctrine with pagan fatalism, but I hold that it is akin thereto, and that it tends to the same practical results. It

is, in my opinion, worse than pagan fatalism. That doctrine represents all events and actions as strictly necessary, but it binds the gods as well as men. All bow to that mysterious power called fate. Thus it relieves the gods of all blame. But Calvinism asserts the freedom of Jehovah, and then imputes to him the foreordination of whatever occurs in the whole universe, and thus, by plain logical consequence, fastens upon him all the just blame of whatever is exceptionable. Calvinism is not pagan fatalism. It is Christian fatalism. It is fatalism baptized.

DISCOURSE III.

"In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will."—EPH. i. 11.

IN the preceding discourse, I showed that the Calvinistic doctrine of the Divine decrees leads to the following consequences, namely, that man is not a free agent; that he is not properly accountable for his conduct; that there is no sin in the world; or, that, if there be sin, God is the author of it; or, that, if he be not strictly and properly the author, he is at least the prime mover of it; that, if sin exist, God prefers sin to holiness in every instance in which sin takes place; that sin is not an evil, but a real good; that whatever is is right; that there is no reasonable ground for repentance, or for prayer, or for pardon; that regeneration

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is nothing else than a change from perfect conformity to the will of God in one way, to perfect conformity to the will of God in another way; that the doctrines of the fall and redemption by Christ are gross and palpable absurdities; that man is not in a state of probation; that God has two hostile wills relative to the same thing; that, not only are his secret decrees and his written laws at variance, but he has also decreed and brings to pass opposite and contradictory events; that civil government is wholly unreasonable; that there is in fact no moral government; that God is not holy, or just, or wise, or truthful, or benevolent; or, that if God be nevertheless holy, and wise, and true, and just, and good, we have the foundation of a new system of morals, which, if adopted, must reverse all our estimates of moral character; that man cannot contribute anything to his personal salvation; that the devil and his angels are as faithful servants of God as any of his elect. It was shown that it leads to Universalism and to rank infidelity; that it sanctions all the errors that were ever promulgated; that it furnishes a complete justification of the worst conduct of the worst men that

ever lived, tends to paralyze all effort to resist temptation, and condemns as impious any opposition to the commission of sin by our neighbors, and, finally, that it is worse than the pagan doctrine of fatalism.

I shall now endeavor to present the true doctrine. As has been said, we do not object to the doctrine of predestination, but to the Calvinistic doctrine. The question is not whether God is a Sovereign, or whether he has his purposes or decrees, but how does he exercise his sovereignty—what are his purposes and decrees? We deny that he has foreordained whatsoever comes to pass.

For all our information upon this great question we must inquire of the sacred oracles. We understand them to teach that God, foreseeing, though not ordaining, the transgression of our first parents, decreed that it should subject them to the penalty of death—eternal death. "In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." He also decreed that their condition should not be at once irremediable, but that a second probation should be allowed them. He also decreed that an atonement should be made, by which the claims of his

government should be vindicated, while he granted to the offenders a respite, and the advantages of a new trial, and which should lay a firm foundation for whatever acts of mercy should be extended to them and their posterity. He further decreed that this atonement should be effected by the suffering and death of his Son, who, for the purpose of effecting this atonement, should assume our nature, and become God-man. The apostle instructs us that he was "delivered" to suffering and death, "by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God." It was also decreed that the benefits of this atonement should extend to all Adam's posterity—that Christ should die for all. He gave him "a ransom for all," that he, "by the grace of God, should taste death for every man." It was also predetermined in the counsels of Heaven, that a change should take place in the administration of the Divine government. The first administration, sometimes called the Adamic law or covenant, was suited to beings perfectly innocent and pure, but not to fallen beings, as it made no provision for pardon or moral restoration. Under its authority the sinner could have no hope.

Another decree provides that the Son of God shall bear the sceptre of authority—that the government shall be upon his shoulders. To this arrangement we suppose the words of the Psalmist to refer: "Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I will give the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." (Ps. ii. 6, 7, 8.) Also the prayer of the apostle Paul, in which he speaks of "the mighty power" of God, "which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." (Eph. i. 21, 23.) It is further ordained that, under this new arrangement, faith shall be the condition of the sinner's acceptance with God—that whosoever be-

lieveth shall be pardoned—justified from all things; that the act of faith which secures the pardon of one sin shall secure the pardon of all then chargeable; that whosoever is pardoned shall be made holy, conformed to the image of the Son of God, and made a child of God by adoption. "For whom he foreknew, them he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son." "Having predestinated us to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ unto himself, according to the good pleasure of his will;" that the great mediatorial scheme should be developed in successive dispensations, usually distinguished as the Patriarchal, Jewish, and Christian dispensations; that one nation of people should be selected as the depository of the sacred oracles, and as a theatre for the exhibition of the true religion; that in the fulness of time, Jews and Gentiles should be placed upon one common ground of religious privilege, the partition wall being broken down. It is also decreed that there shall be a general judgment. God hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world; that there shall be a resurrection of the bodies of men; that the bodies of the saints at the resurrection

shall be made very glorious; that the righteous of every age and country shall ultimately be gathered into one glorious place, from which all sin and pain shall be excluded, and shall constitute one undivided family forever. "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory." "Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: That in the dispensation of the fulness of times, he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in Heaven and which are on earth." And, finally, it is decreed that while the righteous shall have life eternal, the wicked, the finally impenitent, and unbelieving, and unholy, shall go away into everlasting punishment—shall be imprisoned in a place originally prepared for the first rebels against the Divine government—the devil and his angels.

Such, as I understand it, is the Methodistic, or Arminian, doctrine of the Divine decrees. There is no difficulty in sustaining this doctrine by Scripture. It is not liable to any of the objections which menace fatally the Calvinistic

scheme. There is no difficulty in perceiving its harmony with man's free agency and moral accountability. It does not give the slightest occasion for the question whether God is the author of sin. He has issued decrees respecting it; but they are all condemnatory. None of them preordain it. It does not admit the supposition of his being a participant in any unholy deed or device. The question never came up among Methodist divines, whether God prefers, in any instance, sin to holiness? They would not, could not, consider it a debatable question. Nor that other question—Is sin the necessary means of the greatest good? Calvinism is justly entitled to the honor of originating such questions as these. No one would ever think of affirming upon Arminian principles that whatever is is right. Arminianism lays a firm basis for Divine moral government, and also for civil government—for rewards and punishments. It not only relieves the Divine attributes from the fearful suspicions and imputations with which Calvinism dishonors them, but surrounds them with a transcendent glory. It protects the morality of the Bible from the devastating incursions to which Cal-

vinism exposes it, and presents the most powerful incentives to piety. It does not throw the protecting shield of the Divine decrees over every form of error and outrage with which earth is filled, or represent God as having two hostile wills. It forms no entangling alliances with heathen fatalism. We are not under the necessity of warning inquirers against committing themselves to the practical influence of the Arminian doctrine of Divine decrees, by saying, with Dr. Boardman, that "These decrees are not the rule of our duty. We are not held responsible for not conforming to them. We are not bound to act with the least reference to them."

The practical bearing of the Arminian doctrine is eminently and obviously salutary. It has not a single aspect which is not favorable to piety and morality. Does a sinner tremble at the word of God? He is made to feel the force of the inspired declaration that the way of transgressors is hard, and to ponder the advantages of reformation? Is he not appalled and paralyzed by the terrible announcement that all his misdeeds, the tendency, if not the nature of which he now contemplates with hor-

ror, are the result of a power which he cannot successfully resist; that he is bound to the hateful course of conduct which he deplores, by eternal decrees; and that, in despite of any feelings or desires he may have, his course may be predestined to be worse in the future than in the past. O, no! He is assured that God never preordained sin. That he commands all men everywhere to repent, and that what he requires of men he will enable them to do. He is told that nothing binds him to sin but his depravity, that he may avail himself of the powerful influences of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, which can make him free from the law of sin and death; and that whom God foreknew, as repenting, and believing, and availing themselves of remedial provisions, he "predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son"—he hath chosen "to be holy and without blame before him in love."

Has the man who is seeking with penitence and prayer the favor of God profoundly humbling views of himself? Does he think it to be a wonderful stretch of condescension and mercy in God to forgive his innumerable and grievous offences? And does he wonder whether God

will, in addition to pardoning him, raise him to those high relationships to the Godhead to which he has raised others? Will he extend to me the grace of adoption? Will he constitute and call me his child? Shall I be favored with those blessed intimacies—those varied and manifold advantages of which that relation is the guaranty? How satisfactory the answer! You will. You will be numbered with his sons and daughters, the coheirs with his eternal—his only begotten Son. God hath not left this an open question. "He hath predestinated us to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ unto himself." "For unto as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to as many as believe in his name."

Christians, you entertain high hopes of heaven. And yet, sometimes, it seems too much for your faith that God should confer upon you such blessedness and glory. Your faith almost staggers at the promise. You are ready to say—

> "How can it be, thou Heavenly King,
> That thou should'st us to glory bring—
> Make slaves the partners of thy throne,
> Deck'd with a never-fading crown?"

Let your faith be invigorated by the assurance that this is settled beyond dispute by God's eternal purpose. It is decreed. "To him that overcometh will I give to sit down with me on my throne." "In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." Nor has this measure been forced upon Jehovah. It is sometimes the case that sovereigns are compelled to yield privileges to restless and revolted subjects. Sometimes contemporary sovereignties combine to force a reluctant ruler into arrangements contrary to his preconceived and preferred policy. Sometimes potent rulers yield their preferences to the sway of sage and influential counsellors, and find themselves committed to a policy which they execute with reluctance, and with exceptions. It is not so with any of the decrees of the Most High. Who, being his counsellor, hath taught him? He "worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will." "It is the Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." It is no less the pleasure of the Son: "Father, I will that they also that thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they

may behold my glory." And he has power to carry out his purposes to their entire fulfilment. O, how precious is this doctrine of Divine predestination!

You may have enemies. There may be those who would deny you a place in the church on earth. You may have been excommunicated and cursed for worshipping the God of your fathers after the manner which some call heresy. Your enemies would fain keep you out of heaven. They profess to be able to do so. But they are mistaken. God has not left it to them to determine who shall enter heaven and who shall not. He has fixed the conditions of salvation independently of their counsels—long before they existed—before the sun began his course. "He will have mercy on whom he will have mercy." To accomplish their end, they must be able to go behind all human arrangements to the decrees, the purposes of heaven, and revoke them. Will they be able to do that? Or, if unable to revoke, or induce him to revoke his decrees, will they be able to defeat them by machinations or physical resistance? Surely not. He will show them "the immutability of his counsels." He will say to them, "My counsel

shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." "There is no wisdom, or understanding, or counsel, against the Lord." "He will make the devices of the people of none effect." "The Lord of Hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it." "Hallelujah, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth!"

And how glorious are the prospects which the decrees of God unfold! These bodies must decay. One of those decrees consigns us to the grave; another provides that we shall be recalled —that death shall be conquered—shall be swallowed up of victory. The prearrangements of Heaven respecting the bodies of the saints, are thus disclosed: "It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body."

Religion does not extinguish or impair our social feelings, but rather refines and invigorates them; and, among the hopes that we have been led to cherish, is that of a reunion with departed friends in heaven, and a participation in the society of the good of other climes and ages; and it is expressly declared that the redeemed

of subsequent ages shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the Kingdom of God.

And while this doctrine is so full of consolation to the Christian, and so fraught with healthful stimulus to piety, it is terrible to the sinner. He need not think to find anything in it to justify or to apologize for his crime, or his impenitency. Nor may he indulge the hope that whatever may be the destiny of other sinners, he will escape the damnation of hell. There can be no influence brought to bear upon Jehovah sufficient to induce him to swerve in a single instance from his plans. The decrees of God are against him. He that believeth shall be saved. He that believeth not shall be damned. "These shall go away into everlasting punishment." And he has power to execute his decrees. All attempts at resistance will be as nothing. "The Lord reigneth; let the people tremble."

I have now presented the two rival theories. There is the Calvinistic doctrine, and there are the consequences to which it leads. We can easily detect the wisdom of the requisition that the teachers of it shall handle it with "special caution," and account for their studiously keep-

ing it out of sight during revivals, and in their ordinary ministrations, and then seeking to divert attention from its practical tendencies by denying that the decrees of God are to be taken as the rule or test of our conduct.

But do I not repeat an Arminian slander when I charge them with partially concealing or disguising the doctrine? No! We have high Calvinistic authority for the imputation. The following is the testimony of a distinguished Congregational minister of New England, the Rev. Dr. Harvey:—

"There is a large number of orthodox ministers in New England who, from family alliances, from constitutional delicacy of temper, &c. &c., as I hinted above, will temporize and make *smooth work*, from an honest conviction that a full disclosure of the truth would *alienate their hearers*. The bitter revilings of base men have been gradually and insensibly leading Calvinistic ministers to *hide their colors*, and *recede* from their ground. Dr. Spring's Church, at Newburyport, Park Street, especially in Dr. Griffin's day, and a few others, have stood like the Macedonian Phalanx. But others have gone backward. *Caution*, CAUTION, has been the watch-

word of ministers. When they do preach the old standard doctrines, it is in so guarded a phraseology that they are not understood to be the same." (*Harvey on Moral Agency*, p. 174.)

This is clear and indisputable. The Methodist preachers are probably included among the "base men" whose "bitter revilings" have brought about this state of things, as none have done more to bring Calvinism into discredit.

And yet, with all this caution, this doctrine is assiduously taught to little children in Sabbath-Schools. It is presented to them and inculcated without disguise. I almost shudder when I think of it. Were all the wealth of this great city offered to me for the privilege of teaching this doctrine to my children, with the understanding that I would withhold counter-instruction, I would spurn the offer. At least, I would do so until my mind had become reconciled to the proposition by a slow and painful process of self-depravation, which, I acknowledge, would not be an impossibility. The apostle Paul speaks of those who through "love of money" have "erred from the faith."

Our Calvinistic brethren may have some ground for claiming that they are in advance of us in learning and intelligence, but it is to

be hoped that they will not offer their holding this doctrine as proof of the justness of the claim. And if it be the case that some minds are determined, by peculiarities in their original formation, to the belief of Calvinism, I thank God that mine does not belong to that class. And, further, it may be a source of consolation to us, in our imputed inferiority, that it does not require much learning or intelligence to refute Calvinism, or to make its supporters ashamed of it.

And when Calvinists ascribe our opposition to their doctrines to depravity, and call our objections to it "impious cavillings," as does Dr. Musgrave, we offer this apology, that our objections are not alleged against what we understand to be the Scripture doctrine; and that if their doctrine be true, and ours false, we are, after all, doing nothing but what God has wisely foreordained we should do. We would also suggest to them that any opposition to our course is resistance to the will of Heaven, so that it is a fair question whether the charge of depravity should not take the opposite direction. But I do not retort it. Methodists never, so far as I know, seek to raise the slightest suspi-

cion of the piety of their Calvinistic brethren on the ground of their being Calvinists.

The assertion that Calvinism is specially and exclusively favorable to civil and religious liberty, is a *sheer* pretence. I will just state a few facts. When the Presbyterians obtained the ascendency in England, they proceeded to establish themselves by law. The *Westminster Confession of Faith* was intended for the English Establishment. Presbyterianism is the established religion of Scotland at this day, and also of Holland, Geneva, and some parts of Germany. Presbyterian ministers in Ireland are supported, in part, by the British Government. They thus consent that Methodists, Baptists, and others, shall be taxed for their support. That Presbyterianism is not the Established Church in this country may be owing altogether to the fact that it has always been too weak to place itself in that position. When the Independents, in Cromwell's time, obtained the ascendency, they followed the example of the Presbyterians. The Congregationalists of New England, who are Calvinists, established their system, by law, in several of the colonies, and continued to be the Established Church after the Revolution, and until

the other sects, combining with unbelievers, became strong enough to put them down and change the State constitutions in favor of equal rights. And, within five or six years of the present time, a Presbyterian Church, in one of the States of this Republic, applied to the legislature, and obtained a grant of one thousand five hundred dollars to be expended upon a Presbyterian church edifice. Many Calvinists have held, and many do yet hold doctrines highly intolerant; and the history of Calvinism is crimsoned by records of blood spilled in support of its tenets. It would be great wisdom on the part of our Calvinistic brethren to allow the question of the bearing of Calvinism upon civil and religious liberty to sleep, undisturbed.

A very strong presumption of the unsoundness of the Calvinistic doctrine of decrees arises from the fact that its advocates are compelled, in answering objections to it, not only to disguise, but also flatly contradict it, and to substitute for it Arminian positions; thus virtually conceding that it is indefensible. Dr. Musgrave, as we have seen, asserts explicitly that God has foreordained whatsoever comes to

pass. He argues that to deny this, would be in effect to deny that God is infinitely wise, benevolent, and powerful. He says: "We have proved, both by reason and revelation, that all things that come to pass are foreordained." He applies this doctrine to sinful actions in the following manner: "Now, that the whole of Pharaoh's conduct had not only been foreknown but foreordained is indisputable." Again, he says: "In connection with the foregoing statements concerning the crucifixion of the Saviour, let us single out the case of one of the individual actors in that awful tragedy, one whose part was the most perfidious and execrable, and see whether his crime was not before ordained, and he the individual predesignated as its perpetrator." He proceeds to the proof of this proposition. But, when it becomes necessary to meet the palpable and irrefutable objections that this doctrine makes God the author of sin, and takes away the responsibility of the creature, he is compelled to change entirely his ground. He substitutes *permission* for *foreordination*, and defines permission to mean simply not preventing. "And is there no difference," says he, "between God's making, or exciting

men to sin, by his power or influence, and his *permitting*, or *not preventing* them from sinning? Between his determining to produce the evil himself, or to cause others by his power to do it, and his predetermining to *permit* men to abuse their liberty and to commit the evil by the *unprevented* exercise of their own voluntary efficiency?"

I reply—there is a very great difference. It is nothing less than the difference between Calvinism and Arminianism. He is led to deny his own doctrine, and take refuge in the one he has tried so hard to refute.

The Rev. Dr. Baker, of Texas, in a tract published by the Presbyterian Board of Publication, and entitled *The Standards of the Presbyterian Church a Faithful Mirror of the Bible*, attempts to establish by Scripture the proposition—"God from all eternity did, by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely and unchangeably foreordain whatsoever comes to pass." But in another, published by the same institution, and entitled *The Sovereignty of God Explained and Vindicated*, the design of which is to present the doctrine of Divine decrees in such a light as will obviate the usual objections

to the Calvinistic view, he says: "Certain things God *brings to pass* by a positive agency. Others he *simply permits* to come to pass. And let it be remarked, permission and approbation do not, by any means, mean the same thing." Again: "Does any one ask what is the difference between *bringing* to pass, and *permitting* to come to pass? I answer: God brought to pass the incarnation of his Son. He permitted to come to pass his crucifixion. The difference is as wide as the east is from the west."

But if God simply permits some things, why do the creed and the catechism of the Presbyterian Church assert, so unequivocally, that he has from all eternity foreordained whatsoever comes to pass, and that he executes, or brings to pass all his decrees? The contradiction is manifest.

The Rev. Dr. Fairchild, in his famous *Great Supper*, says: "Calvinists do not regard the decrees of God as extending to all events in the same manner. Some things God has determined to *effect* by his own agency, and other things he has decreed to *permit* or *suffer* to be."

But, if the Calvinistic doctrine be that his decrees merely "extend to all events" (a very different thing from his decreeing all events), and that while he "decrees" and "effects" some he merely "permits" or "suffers" other events, what must we understand to be the Arminian doctrine, against which they are called to contend so earnestly? Are they prepared to acknowledge that they have abandoned Calvinism and run into Arminianism? Do they mean to say that there is no difference between these systems on the point in question? Not at all. How then do they preserve the antagonism of the two creeds? What is the Arminianism against which they are arrayed? Dr. Musgrave thus attempts the solution of this question.

"Now, I submit, whether the difficulty, thus confessedly pressing against both systems, is not capable on our principles, of a much more full and satisfactory conclusion. For we not only say, as Wesley does, that 'God knew that it was best, on the whole, not to prevent the first sin of Adam,' but we add, that, knowing this, he determined not only to permit that, but all the sins that he knew would follow from it, and

to limit and overrule the whole for his most excellent glory."

It seems, then, that the difference between Calvinism and Arminianism respecting the Divine decrees is that Calvinism affirms that God knew it was best, on the whole, not to prevent the sins which he has not prevented, but to permit, and limit and overrule them, while Arminianism affirms that God knew it would be best, on the whole, not to prevent the *first* sin, but determined to prevent all the sins that he foresaw would flow from it. What a strange statement! To what shifts are these men driven by their unfortunate creed! Where does Mr. Wesley, or any other Arminian writer, say this directly or indirectly? Our author very wisely declines any references at this point. Mr. Wesley does, indeed, deny that God permitted sin, even "the first sin of Adam," in the sense of approving or tolerating it; but whoever denied that God permits, in the sense of suffering—not forcibly preventing, the sins which actually occur? He appropriates to himself, unfairly, Mr. Wesley's doctrine, and then imputes to Mr. Wesley a tenet so perfectly foolish that it may be doubted whether any man

ever advanced it, whether sane or insane, drunk or sober.

No! these are not the doctrines of Calvinism and Arminianism respectively. The reader will see the importance of the pains taken, in the first discourse, to identify Calvinism. I proved beyond dispute, that Calvinistic creeds, Catechisms, and other theological treatises, teach explicitly, that God has purposed, decreed, foreordained, whatsoever comes to pass; that in some way or other he brings to pass all events; that nothing will, or can, come to pass but what he has ordained; that none of his purposes can be defeated; that it cannot, with truth, be said of any event—it may or may not occur; and that all actual results, by whatever means obtained, are expressions of the design, or decree of God. Arminianism teaches on the contrary, that God has not ordained whatsoever comes to pass—that some things he has preordained; that other things he has not, but has, nevertheless, approved and commanded them, leaving it to the free agency of the creature to fulfil his requisitions; that other things, he not only has not foreordained, but, has condemned and prohibited them, and yet permits or suffers

them to be, in preference to that violent interference with free agency which would be necessary to their forcible prevention.

Dr. Fairchild tells us that "this distinction between a decree to *effect* and a decree to *permit* has been adopted by Predestinarian divines in all ages."

Yes, in all ages Predestinarian divines have been compelled to abandon and contradict their creed in the progress, and for the purpose, of its defence. But Calvin himself formally discards and protests against this distinction. He says respecting it: "A question of greater difficulty arises from other passages, where God is said to incline or draw according to his own pleasure, Satan himself and all the reprobate. For the carnal understanding scarcely comprehends how he, acting by their means, contracts no defilement from their criminality, and even in operations common to himself and them, is free from every fault, and yet righteously condemns those whose ministry he uses. Hence was invented the distinction between *doing* and *permitting;* because to many persons this has appeared an inexplicable difficulty, that Satan and all the impious are subject to the power and

government of God, so that he directs their malice to whatever end he pleases, and uses their crimes for the execution of his judgments. The modesty of those who are alarmed at the appearance of absurdity, might perhaps be excusable, if they did not attempt to vindicate the Divine justice by a pretence utterly destitute of any foundation in truth. They consider it absurd that a man should be blinded by the will and command of God, and afterwards be punished for his blindness. They therefore evade the difficulty, by alleging that it happens only by the permission of God, and not by the will of God; but God himself, by the most unequivocal declarations, rejects this subterfuge."

But Calvin protests in vain against resorting to this "evasion" and "subterfuge." It is the only way in which the advocates of his doctrine can make a plausible show of argument when pressed with certain objections. Hence we find the Westminster divines employing it. They tell us in their Confession of Faith, that God was pleased, according to his use and holy counsel, to *permit* the sin of our first parents. Lest, however, the faithful should fall into a

serious mistake, another part assures them that the providence of God "extendeth itself to the first fall, and all other sins of angels and men, and that not by a *bare permission*, but such as hath joined with it a most wise and powerful bounding, and otherwise ordering and governing of them, &c." The nature of that "ordering and governing" is explained in the declaration that "God from all eternity did by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass." But how learned men can talk of God's permitting what he has eternally and unchangeably ordained, is a mystery to some of the unlearned. Is it necessary to tell us, gravely, that God permits to come to pass that which from all eternity he freely ordained shall come to pass? He permits men and angels to do what he has predetermined they shall do, and what they cannot avoid doing! Wonderful!!

The apology for this gross misapplication of language, on the part of men whose learning is sometimes magnified almost into infallibility, is found in their distressing emergency. In no other way can they, with any plausibility, meet their opponents. The usefulness of this term

"permit" is admirably indicated by the account which a Presbyterian colporteur gives of an interview with some who objected to the Calvinistic doctrine of decrees. He says:—

"I felt myself, however, sometimes compelled to combat with the opponents of our Calvinistic creed. On one occasion entering a house, the members of which all attended the Presbyterian Church, but were not members, I sold a Confession of Faith to the gentleman; his lady inquired what the name of the book was; and on being told, after turning over its pages in a hasty manner, exclaimed: 'I could never allow that book to be under my roof—it should not be read, and it never ought to have been printed.'

"What was I to do? The doctrine of our Church, so far as election is concerned, was attacked. After some little conversation on the subject, I found that she and her son charged our Confession with teaching that God passed a decree which put the fall of Adam beyond the possibility of escape."

Here was an exigency. Let us see how he meets it. That the Confession does teach the doctrine which the lady and her son ascribed

to it, is as plain as anything can be. He *decreed whatsoever comes to pass*, and *executes* his decrees. Does he ask her what objections she has to this doctrine and offer to refute them? Does he directly and promptly deny that Calvinism teaches this doctrine? No! Such a course would be rather hazardous, considering the character of the books he was seeking to distribute, and did actually leave with them. What course, then, does he take? "I told her," says he, "if the chapter on the fall of man said so, I was as loath to believe it as she was; and if she could find it so, I would condemn the doctrine." Mark! He does not say, unconditionally and unequivocally that he condemned the doctrine, and was as loath to believe it as she was, but *if the chapter which treated on the fall of man said so*. Well, what follows: "On turning to the 6th chapter, how surprised was she to read—'This their sin God was pleased according to his wise and holy counsel to *permit*.'" This word *permit* helped him out of his difficulty. "Here was a fact," says he, "of which they had never heard before, and which gave them no little satisfaction." He doubtless left them under the impression that the Confession

of Faith does not teach that God decreed and brought to pass the sin of Adam. However, he did not leave them until they willingly purchased the *Confession of Faith, the Great Supper,* and *Fisher's Catechism,* which asserts, as I have already shown, that "the very reason why anything comes to pass in time is, because God has decreed it," that "none of the decrees of God can be defeated, or fail of execution;" and that God "predetermines the creature to such or such an action, and not to another, shutting up all other ways of acting, and leaving that only open which he had determined to be done."

Another presumption in favor of Arminianism results from the readiness with which Methodist preachers are installed as pastors of Calvinistic churches, both old and new school, with the understanding, if their own statements be reliable, that they are not required to renounce or contradict the Arminian creed. Arminian ministers are coming into great demand by Calvinists. They are admitted into the Methodist ministry with the understanding that they are sound Arminians. They remain for years without exciting the least suspicion of their orthodoxy. When, all at once, without

any prior change of ecclesiastical relations, or intimation of a change of theological views, they walk into Calvinistic pulpits. I make no remarks at present upon the morality of this course, but deduce that Arminianism preaching, to some extent, is necessary to keep up Calvinistic congregations.

Methodists, you may well prize your creed. Your ministers can preach it without reserve. You can defend it. The water of life comes to you through no corrupting medium. You are in no danger of inhaling poisonous sediment. It will bear analysis. It comes to you fresh and abundant. Drink it, and dig channels wide and long for its diffusion, that others may be blest as you are.

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